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RED WINE OF YOUTH

A Life of Rupert Brooke

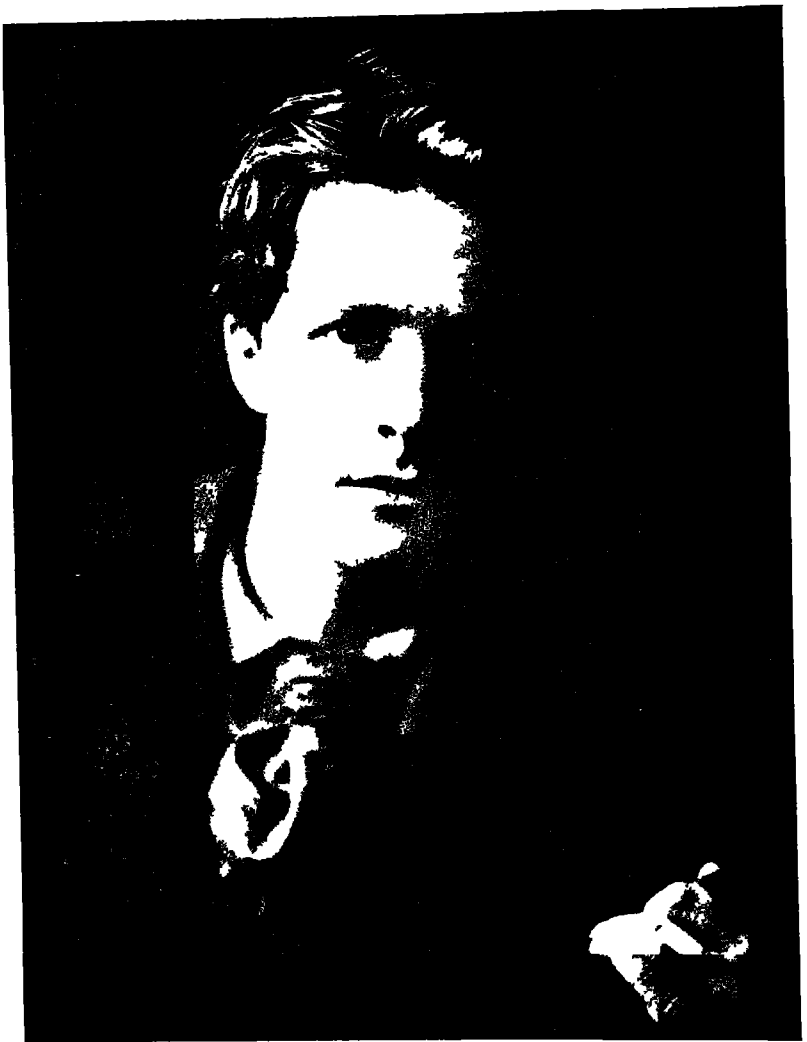


Photo by Sherill Schell

Rupert Brooke at twenty-five.

RED WINE OF YOUTH

A Life of Rupert Brooke

By ARTHUR STRINGER

ILLUSTRATED

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First Edition

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To Dr. Edward Dent, John Masefield, Wilfrid Gibson, Duncan Campbell Scott,* Reginald Pole, Eugene Hutchinson, Ellen Van Volkenburg and Christopher Morley must go my thanks for the use of letters and pictures and numerous copyrighted extracts. The author also expresses his gratitude to the following American and English publishers for license to quote from duly copyrighted

* Since these lines were written Duncan Campbell Scott passed away in the city of Ottawa, December 15, 1947. He died at the age of eighty-three, after writing his own valorous *L'Envoi:*

> He that cowers now is not the less a varlet.
> I know I'll brave them well—I know not why;
> Toss me my proudest cloak of green and scarlet;
> Fellows—old friends—good bye!

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A. S.

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RED WINE OF YOUTH

A Life of Rupert Brooke

To Rupert Brooke

(England 1913)

by

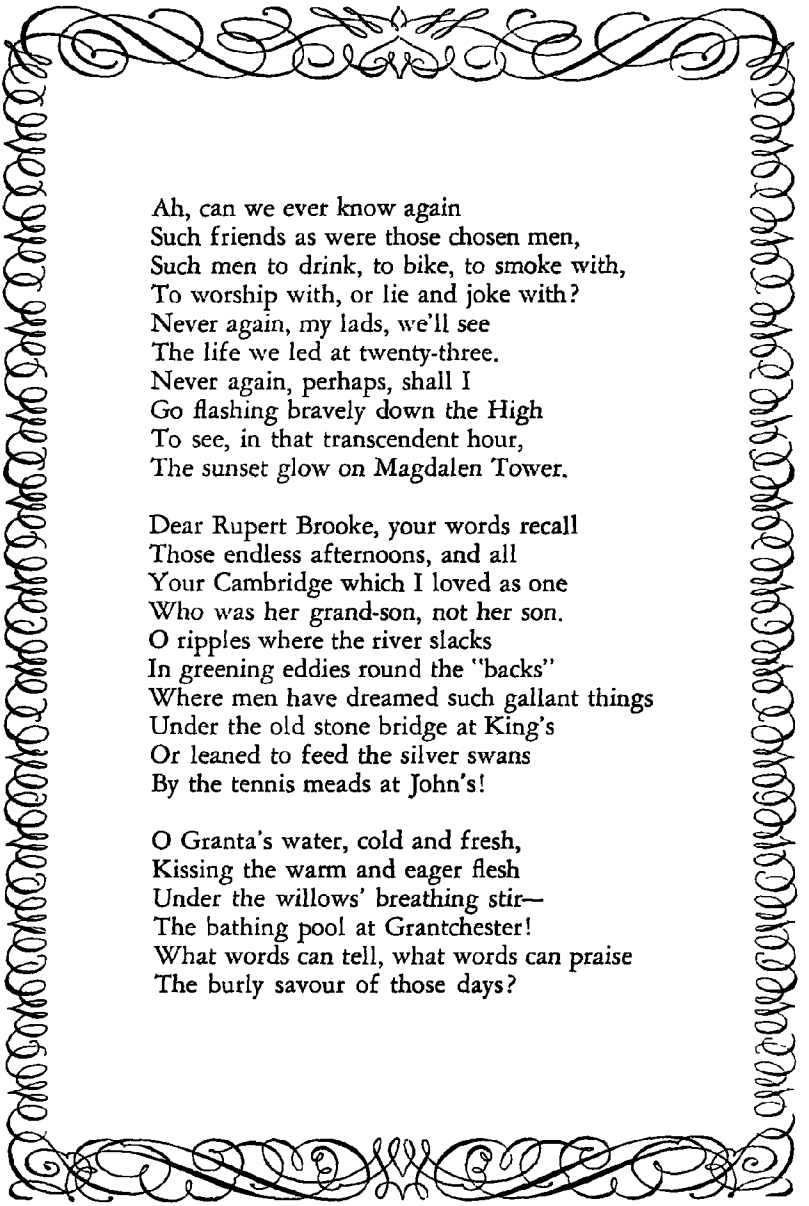
CHRISTOPHER MORLEY

From *Chimneysmoke*, copyright, 1921, by Christopher Morley.
Published by J. B. Lippincott Company.

O England, England that July
How placidly the days went by.
Two years ago—how long it seems—
In that dear England of my dreams
I loved and smoked and laughed amain
And rode to Cambridge in the rain.
A careless godlike life was there;
To spin the roads with Shotover,
To dream while punting on the Cam,
To lie, and never give a damn
For anything but comradeship
And books to read and ale to sip
And Cambridge cheese, packed tight on straw,
In those old days before the War.

O poignant echoes of that time!
I hear the Oxford towers chime
The throbbing of those mellow bells,
And all the sweet old English smells,
The Deben water, quick with salt,
The Woodbridge brew-house and the malt,
The Suffolk villages, serene
With lads at cricket on the green,
And Wytham strawberries, so ripe,
And Murray's Mixture in my pipe!

In those dear days, in those dear days,
All pleasant lay the country ways;
The echo of our stalwart mirth
Went echoing wide around the earth
And in an endless bliss of sun
We lay and watched the river run.
And you by Cam, and I by Isis,
Were happy with our own devices.



Ah, can we ever know again
Such friends as were those chosen men,
Such men to drink, to bike, to smoke with,
To worship with, or lie and joke with?
Never again, my lads, we'll see
The life we led at twenty-three.
Never again, perhaps, shall I
Go flashing bravely down the High
To see, in that transcendent hour,
The sunset glow on Magdalen Tower.

Dear Rupert Brooke, your words recall
Those endless afternoons, and all
Your Cambridge which I loved as one
Who was her grand-son, not her son.
O ripples where the river slacks
In greening eddies round the "backs"
Where men have dreamed such gallant things
Under the old stone bridge at King's
Or leaned to feed the silver swans
By the tennis meads at John's!

O Granta's water, cold and fresh,
Kissing the warm and eager flesh
Under the willows' breathing stir—
The bathing pool at Grantchester!
What words can tell, what words can praise
The burly savour of those days?

Dear singing lad, those days are dead,
And gone for aye your golden head;
And many other well-loved men
Will never dine in Hall again.
I too have lived remembered hours
In Cambridge, heard the summer showers
Make music on old Heffer's pane
While I was reading Pepys or Taine.
Through Trumpington and Grantchester
I used to roll on Shotover;
At Hauxton Bridge my lamp would light
And sleep in Royston for the night.
Or to Five Miles from Anywhere
I used to scull, and sit and swear
While wasps attacked my bread and jam
Those summer evenings on the Cam—
(O crispy English cottage-loaves
Baked in ovens, not in stoves!
O white unsalted English butter,
O satisfaction none can utter!)

To think, that while those joys I knew
In Cambridge, *I did not know you!*

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY

CHAPTER 1

The Unwritten Odyssey

A CHINA-BUILT junk, with three torn bat-wing sails above her hull of carved and lacquered teakwood, went down in the storm-lashed wastes of the mid-Pacific. Just where and when she foundered, with all on board, remains a secret of that speechless sea. The last message came from her on the morning of March 24, 1939. Her captain, still gallantly blithe, radioed that he was facing southerly gales with his lee rail under and was having a wonderful time.

The rest is silence; silence, and wonder and mystery.

But when that ill-starred junk, the *Sea Dragon,* went to the bottom she took with her a man who had given his life to adventure and discourse on the adventures of other men. Several years before his untimely death in the Pacific, Richard Halliburton had decided to write the life of a fellow nomad who had followed the Red Gods and traversed the waterways of the world even as he himself had done.

The author of *The Royal Road to Romance,* it is true, had never met Brooke in person, and had never seen "Shelley plain." But the two had come together in the spirit world of the written word. When a mere schoolboy at Lawrenceville, Richard had fallen under the spell of the still youthful poet's fearlessly intimate lyrics. The small volume he carried about with him became his Bible.

He placed Rupert Brooke on an adolescent list of heroes, side by side with Alexander the Great and Lord Byron and Richard Coeur de Lion. When he learned of the poet's death and burial at Skyros his one wish was some day to make a pilgrimage to his idol's island grave.

In the years that intervened, before that pilgrimage was undertaken, Richard read and pondered the later war poems. He found his own youthful moods exultantly expressed in the earlier lyrics and proceeded to glean every morsel of information he could as to his hero's life and background.

But it was more than a case of mere hero worship. For the two men had much in common. Both were endowed with physical appeal and charm of manner. Both were born romantics. Both in their college days tramped and camped in the byways of the world. Both were sedulous readers of poetry and both believed, with Keats, that the fullness of life lay in living with gusto. So both, in time, sought the open trail and adventure in far-off lands. Though both saw boyish fragility eventually merge into the calisthenic strength of manhood, they nursed a common dread of old age and a dislike for the thought of passing away without progeny. Yet both lived and died unmated, just as both, in the end, faced the Final Adventure and passed on when life had so much to give them.

It was but natural that Rupert's untimely death at the front and the heroizing circumstances of his midnight burial on far-off Skyros should deepen his worshiper's resolve for that projected journey to the Upper Cyclades. It was a determination that was finally carried out. How Richard went to the Aegean, landed on Skyros and visited the poet's grave, has already been told in *The Glorious Adventure.*

"I stood beside the grave alone," Richard wrote at the end of his Aegean wayfaring. "The silence of the night enfolded land and ocean in dim mystery. The stars crept close to illuminate the name carved across the marble tomb—a tomb that was to me a sacred shrine. . . . In his most poetic fancy Brooke could have desired no lovelier spot. On three sides the marble mountains shield it; seaward there is a glorious vista of the island-dotted ocean, bluer than the sky itself which looks straight down through the wreath of olive trees upon the tomb. The flowering sage that perfumes all of Skyros grows thickest here. There is a sweetness in the air, a calm-

ness in the ancient trees, a song in the breeze through the branches, a poem in the picture of the sea. . . . Twilight had gone, and the stars were gleaming. . . . I stood beside the grave and thought how safe Brooke was here. He had a beautiful burial place; he had the brightest sky and the best sunsets in the world; and the whispering olive grove, and the view of the sea."

All night long, while the moon rose from behind the mountains' rim and paled again with the breaking dawn, the silent watcher dreamed and brooded beside the marble tomb. When a shadow moved under the silvered trees the startled watcher studied it, half expecting it was Rupert Brooke's specter confronting him. But it proved to be only the shifting shadow of a low-hanging olive branch.

During that vigil, however, a second resolve took shape in Richard's mind.

"Then the splendid idea came to me that I might go to England on my way home, and try to meet Brooke's mother and his friends at Rugby, to report to them that his grave was still as beautiful and peaceful as they would want it. I realized I'd rather meet Mrs. Brooke than the Queen of England. . . . And why not Cambridge also? I could go there from Rugby, and walk across the meadows to Grantchester, and call upon the Old Vicarage where Brooke spent the happiest days of his life."

From Naples, on his devious journey westward, the modern Ulysses wrote to Mrs. Brooke explaining he had taken some interesting photographs of her son's tomb on Skyros and expressed the hope he might show these to her on his arrival in England toward the year end.

In December 1925, in response to a coolly formal note that came to him in his London hotel from Mrs. Brooke, he went to Rugby to meet the poet's mother. He had been warned that she might prove as unapproachable as royalty. But the intrepid adventurer who had emulated Byron by casually swimming the Hellespont was not daunted by English reticence.

His two-hour visit with that sorrowing mother who had lost three

sons did not open auspiciously. She listened quietly to Richard's expressions of sympathy and seemed genuinely interested in his Skyros pictures. But beyond that her responses were disappointingly reserved. She remained sternly opposed to any plan of publicizing her Rupert's career. The would-be biographer went back to London feeling he had gleaned nothing of importance to write about his idol.

So disappointing was the encounter with Rupert's mother that two years elapsed before Richard returned to Rugby, determined to overcome an opposition he still failed to understand. But his assault on that citadel of reserve was not an easy one. He still found Mrs. Brooke one of the most formidable persons he had ever met. "She's very discouraging, very set, very unsympathizing," he wrote of his second encounter with her. He was conscious of barriers that were phantasmal yet firm.

There were, it may be deduced, certain reasons for reticence. Like many another star-gazer, Rupert had not always followed the paths of what his puritanical-minded mother regarded as rectitude. With all his fineness of feeling and his wind-harp responsiveness to the urges of the flesh, he had not escaped those human frailties which according to Saint Luke could even win the pity of God. There was a chapter or two in his book of life that called for silence.

But this second Richard the Lion-Hearted, who claimed that he always liked resistance, was not easily discouraged. Even when his hostess confronted him with a curt "Ask your questions, young man—one—two—three—four," he saw no reason for making a retreat. When his questions exceeded the allotted number, in fact, and seemed to be probing too deeply into personal issues he was only temporarily halted by the acid announcement: "I happen to belong to a family that was never in the habit of taking its baths in public." That passionate curiosity and craving for knowledge which had carried him over many a rough road left him patient in the face of passing disapproval. He did his best to explain that he merely wanted to understand the man he was determined to write

about. Any skeletons that lurked in the family closet could remain there.

The strong-minded lady relented a little. Perhaps she detected in the New World intruder a personal charm reminiscent of her own adored and beautiful son, though any reference to Rupert's physical attractiveness invariably awakened her anger. Perhaps she was won over by her visitor's obvious sincerity. The ice walls went down. It was not long before Richard, sitting on a hassock at her feet, was listening as she talked quietly about her son who slept in a far-off grave.

Yet there were definite reservations in that surrender. Mrs. Brooke was willing to hand over an early photograph or two and impart some of the essential facts of Rupert's life at Rugby and Grantchester. But any information as to his interests and activities was given only on condition that no single word of it was to be committed to print until after her death.

"Sensitive poets," the would-be biographer concluded, "often have such mothers, vital, dominating, strong."

That stern and sorrowing mother, who had already lost her husband and sons, followed them to the grave in 1931.

There were, of course, other sources to be delved into. After visiting Rugby and Cambridge and wandering about the Grantchester countryside and interviewing friends and relatives of the dead poet, Richard went on to London, where he sought out still more of Rupert's associates and from them obtained letters and reminiscences that could throw new light on his idol's character and career.

Some of the poet's acquaintances, the presumptive author of the biography found, stood unwilling to surrender to other hands, and especially American hands, any information that carried the threat of disturbing a posthumous tradition already approaching sanctification. The mythopoeists were intent on merging the man into the myth, almost evangelical in their ardor to keep the picture one of knightly probity, as simplified as a stained-glass angel in a chapel window. For, unlike an American Whitman who fabricated his

own rather legendary figure, Rupert Brooke was being transfigured into a sort of Arthurian angel by a coterie of over-zealous friends who remained blind to his faults. He was not the gilded gargoyle those friends tried to make him. That there should be discrepancies between the legend and the recorded facts may be ascribed to a human enough tendency to dramatize into sanctity what was once dear to the heart. The magnetic Rupert, being human, was not without his failings. The one extenuating circumstance was that he never entirely grew up. He remained, to the end, very much of a boy. He poured out the sweet red wine of youth before he was given a chance to fulfill his destiny.

But those blindly loyal friends who preferred Bowdlerizing to Boswellizing were in the minority. Men of letters, from John Masefield to Edmund Gosse and Wilfrid Gibson, were liberal in their surrender of letters and *memorabilia* and as yet unpublished bits of prose and verse. Cathleen Nesbitt, the talented Irish-born actress who had first come to America with the Abbey Theatre players, permitted a judiciously edited number of Rupert's letters to be copied. For those letters, ardent and intimate, were documents in evidence of a rhapsodic love affair that was both idyllic and destined to be ill-starred. Violet Asquith, the brilliant daughter of the then Prime Minister, was also willing to lift the curtain a little on her dead friend's life.

But by far the most co-operative, once the situation had been made clear to him, was Edward Marsh,* Private Secretary to the First Lord of the Admiralty, now Sir Edward Marsh. For eight long years he had been Rupert's friend, had watched over him like a father, and after the poet's death had written the invaluable *Memoir* that stood the only intimate recountal of his all-too-brief career.

* Edward Marsh, son of the master of Downing College, Cambridge, has long been close to the seats of the mighty. In 1900 he was private secretary to Chamberlain, in 1903 private secretary to Lyttelton, and still later private secretary to Churchill, accompanying the latter to East Africa and Uganda. In 1915 and 1916 he was Asquith's secretary and for five years after that resumed his secretarial duties under Churchill, filling the same position with the Duke of Devonshire from 1922 to 1924.

The warmhearted and affable "Eddie"—for as such he was known, significantly enough, to countless friends—gladly came to Richard's help and, infected with the younger man's enthusiasm, not only directed him to other sources but gave him access to the Marsh diary and notebooks. What is more, he allowed the would-be biographer to make copies of letters to and from Rupert, released to him a number of the latter's unpublished poems and talked over and corrected sporadic data already in Richard's hands. In doing this he was ready to acknowledge that his own *Memoir* was necessarily incomplete and in no way definitive. Perspective and scale would be less difficult to adjust, he knew, after the stabilizing lapse of years.

Yet the task of assembling the material duly harvested by the later investigator carried the promise of being no easy one. The era of deification may have passed but there was still the nebulous line between *dicenda* and *tacenda* to be remembered. The patina of time may have dimmed the luster of the legend, but both the voice and the vivid personality of the Apollonian youth who sang and died for his country was still a jealously cherished memory with his compatriots. The new interpreter, as well, found himself confronted by many contradictions.

Some friends remember Brooke as shy and modest; others describe him as willfully self-assertive and given to exhibitionism. Some speak of his golden voice and his genius for interpreting his own verse; others claim that his reading (like his acting) was as unimpressive as his voice was monotonous. Some maintain he was always gentle and kindly and considerate; yet he could be curt in his criticisms, violent in his dislikes, and sometimes guilty of "the superb insolence and the lovely brutality of youth" which he had once detected in Marlowe. He was a lover of beauty yet lived in continual protest against beauty. He was a Romantic who detested romanticism, and an apostle of *carpe diem* enjoyment who was obsessed with the thought of death. He is reported as solemnly leading Rugby Chapel in prayer yet proving as vocal as the youthful Marlowe of the Elizabethans in his opposition to established

religion. He had no belief in a future life. On this earth, however, he hungered for enchantment. For the world, to him, remained a playground, where such a thing as manual labor was foreign to his interests and any thought of hardening toil was remote from his intentions. His heritage may not have been a markedly aristocratic one but the aristocratic attitude persisted in his Athenian aloofness and his impatience with the barbarian. He could lose himself, at times, in a love for all humanity and claim fellowship with the raggedest derelict that drifted about a village street, but his affiliations with the lower classes were tenuous and he could be as intolerant as Coriolanus with democracy, especially with American democracy.

Some who claim to have known him expatiate on the ease with which he wrote, while the laboring artist himself has explained how he pondered and brooded and patiently filed and revised, confessing that he spent three long months on his three-page poem "The Fish." Some associates contend he remained platonic and mentally austere, claiming amorous adventure was merely a side issue in his all-embracing zest for life. Others accept the belief he merited the epithet of the "Great Lover" and, agreeing with Goethe that the world is moved not so much by the love of God as by the love of woman, did not and could not escape the voluminous soft protection of many mothering spirits anxious to shield over-sensitive youth from the world. Erotic experience and its aftermath, it is true, afforded material for much of his verse. But he left behind him scant record of either abandoned Byronic romances or tragic Shelleyan misalliances. His final interest was in his versifying. He himself may have claimed a Celtlike inability to recognize the spiritual glory of work, but he toiled so assiduously at his job of writing that he fell a victim of nervous prostration and was twice bundled off to the Continent for a summer-long rest. He has been described, in some quarters, as abstemious and frugal-living and fond of plain food, yet his letters abound in references to his beer drinking and his consumption of stout and his delight in divers Lucullan repasts. Some reminiscent admirers speak of his lithe and

athletic figure, while others attest to his carelessly awkward carriage, his disregard of dress and his habit of lounging against any furniture at hand.

It all merges into an oddly conflicting picture, nonetheless interesting, perhaps, because of its very contradictions. For intimacy, often enough, can be a handicap to final judgment. With so enigmatic a character it is not easy to probe beneath the surface and detect the motive behind the movement and the impulse behind the occasional defiance of convention. The life of genius, conditioned by inner and elusive influences, is not readily understandable. On one point, however, the evidence is clear and the chorus of voices united.

Rupert Brooke was one of those rare poets who looked the part. With his vivid coloring and his almost womanly smoothness of skin, with his mop of fair hair, with a golden tint, crowning an almost godlike beauty of face, with his English blue eyes that could glow with unanglican ardencies and with his casually responsive and carelessly radiant spirit, he invariably cast a spell over those who came in contact with him. From Henry James and John Masefield to Ian Hamilton* and Winston Churchill, they all succumbed to the charm of this dangerously endowed youth who expected so much of life and embodied so much of a now-fading English tradition. With him and his poetry it was not an instance of the ailing oyster producing the pearl. As one long-range victim of his pulchritude observed: "He is a poem himself!"

This challenging physical attractiveness may at times have left him the prey of those predaceous Dulcineas whose litanies are vocal

* "I have seen famous men and brilliant figures in my day, but never one so thrilling, so vital, as that of our hero. Like a prince he would enter a room, like a prince quite unconscious of his own royalty, and by that mere act put a spell upon every one around him. In the twinkling of an eye gloom changed into light; dullness sent forth a certain sparkle in his presence. . . . Here was someone who was distinguished by a nameless gift of attraction, head and shoulders above the crowd; and it is the memory of this personal magnetism more even than the work his destiny permitted him to fulfill that adds strength to the roots of his ever growing fame." Sir Ian Hamilton at the unveiling of the Rupert Brooke Memorial in Rugby School Chapel, as reported in the Rugby *Observer*.

with the claim that the youthful poet must live ardently before he can sing impressively. He could not entirely escape them, perilously blessed as he was with beauty of feature and boyish charm of manner. But, young as he was, he sought and found his salvation through an escape into intellectuality. It was a retreat to the subjective that tended all too soon to temper his mood into moroseness and presaged that later post-orgastic listlessness which crept into so many of his lyrics. It is the mood that runs through "Menelaus and Helen," that dominates the poem first called "Lust" and later called "Libido," that gives a sort of agonized and contrapuntal ugliness to the lines under the slightly fallacious title of "Jealousy."

Women, it must be assumed, played a profound part in the life of this overardent and oversensitive young Epicurean. But, as has been said before, there is no record of Casanovian adventures along the way, no whisper of Shelleylike disasters, and no catastrophic surrender to the voluptuary issues that marred the life of the frustrated hero of Missolonghi. The truth is, indeed, that Rupert Brooke won and held the friendship of many women who could attach the stabilizing tail of discretion to the kite of romantic affection. They were his helpers and counselors, his companions and his comforters, sometimes his critics and sometimes his inspiration. His letters to loyal friends of their sex are both numerous and enlightening, though by no means as numerous as his letters to men. He spilled much ink, in his too-brief life, in trying to bind closer to him the companions he valued and the friends he craved to keep in this calamitously changing world. Because of these outpourings that brief but beautifully vocal life has fewer secrets than one finds in the customarily tangled-up career of genius.

Richard Halliburton was, of course, attracted by that career. But he confessed to an ulterior motive in his proposed recountal of it. What he was actually in search of was a divorce from the personal, an escape from the perpendicular pronoun, the "I" that had to repeat itself so disturbingly in all his self-revealing books of travel. There was the danger, he claimed, of those volumes being accepted as an exercise in personal glorification. And from any pos-

sible charge of self-exploitation he proposed to rescue himself by the objective exploitation of a life not his own.

It was his expressed intention to make the first half of the book gay and vivid, the second half scholarly and interpretative.

But the book was never written. The amassed letters and notes were never made use of. The adventurer who once braved the Sahara and once climbed Mount Olympus met a death at sea as untimely and tragic as the earlier death he had proposed to write about. And the accumulated material was passed on to other hands.

CHAPTER 2

Gray Walls and Golden Youth

THE gray old market town of Rugby, on the Warwickshire tableland sloping up from the south bank of the Avon, has long been known as the home of one of England's most illustrious public schools. It is spoken of as a hamlet in *Domesday Book*. The first Rugby Chapel, eight centuries before its successor was made memorable by Matthew Arnold, goes back to the reign of Stephen. For four long centuries Rugby School has shaped and colored the character of England's youth.

In the shadow of these historic walls a poet first saw the light of day. At Rugby on the third of August in the year 1887 a son was born to William Parker Brooke and his wife, Mary Ruth Cotterill. This son, who was later christened Rupert Chawner Brooke, was the second of three brothers, all of whom were unhappily destined to die before they reached the age of thirty.

William Parker Brooke, a canon's son, was then a teacher in Rugby School, where a master's remuneration was still rather modest. Rupert's mother, fortunately, had funds of her own, funds which, though dispensed with Spartan frugality, eventually permitted her gifted son to share in what she regarded as the better things of life. She was considerate, but never indulgent. She was strong-willed and sternly critical, but she was willing, when necessary, to make sacrifices for the restless youth who demanded so little and yet so much. He was never ashamed of his background. And if he was not born with a silver spoon in his mouth he at least made his appearance in the midst of considerable time-mellowed Sheffield plate. He was not denied the Englishman's customary

Grand Tour of the Continent. But he was able to boast, later in life, that he could dress on three pounds a year.

When Rupert was five years old, in fact, his father was promoted to Housemaster of School Field. There, for the next eight years, the family made its home. It was a modest home with a formalized but slightly unkempt garden where the youthful Rupert wandered and played and in the old pergola essayed his first ventures into the world of the written word. He was not happy when he was sent off to a small preparatory school at Hillbrow, where his more formal-minded brother Dick had preceded him.

Little record remains of Rupert's Hillbrow days. Life there was embryonic and objectively uneventful. It became more animated when he met and fell under the influence of a much older youth who answered to the name of St. John Lucas—a name which in the free masonry of boy life was soon converted into Jack Lucas. This older youth was already a dabbler in literature, not unaffected by the wearied perversities of the Naughty Nineties.

His appeal to Rupert was immediate. Contact with a more mature aspirant for literary honors must have awakened, or at least deepened, the younger lad's interest in expressing himself on paper. Instead of scribbling censorable rhymes in the blank pages of his textbooks the schoolmaster's son pioneered into less frivolous exercises in rhythmic expression. He ventured a serious poem or two. But he kept the matter a secret from his family.

There was nothing robust about Lucas. But he was understanding and articulate. His patter about literature and his increasing facility in turning out light verse left him one of the elect in the eyes of the younger groper after self-expression. To Rupert he stood for sophistication and things of the spirit, proving a tolerant comrade with whom one could talk over the problems of adolescence and discuss the intricacies of prosody. Lucas, for all his tendency to walk with the decadents, was destined to become a sympathetic counselor and critic of Rupert during that earlier formative period when he was so in need of help. Years later, when Lucas abjured law to produce a novel entitled *The Marble Sphinx,*

his younger disciple was much impressed by its morbid cleverness.

But the son of the Rugby schoolmaster, in those earlier and light-hearted years, was living his poetry more than writing it. He was a dreamy boy, more interested in insects and animals than in the monotony of classroom study. It is safe to assume that any home-sickness he may have experienced in his exile from Rugby was softened by the knowledge of his escape from parental supervisions already clouding his carefree quest of unscholastic diversions.

There is a picture of him in his boyhood garden, patiently trying to teach his fat old bull terrier (known as "Mister Pudsey Dawson" in dubious honor of a previous owner) to retrieve timorous toads from the long grass into which they attempted to escape. He was equally attentive to a pair of pink-eared rabbits and a cage of white mice that made one corner of his play yard as odoriferous as a neglected horse stall. He always had what his nurse called an itching heel. From the first he was a wanderer. More than once he strayed away from his home district and was found only after hours of search. The suggestion of music lessons, when there was so much to be explored in neighboring meadows, left him with the determination to abandon his home circle for life in a tinker's van. For he was always happiest out of doors, a brooding blue-domer who rambled along streams and hedgerows, yet, oddly enough, was never what might be called a close student of nature.

Even as a child he showed a reluctance to conform. At the age of twelve he was independent-minded enough to sit on the platform at a local pro-Boer meeting. When upbraided by his indignant mother for resorting to bullying tactics with his younger brother, he demanded to know what was wrong with his conduct. His exacting parent none too patiently explained that he was older and bigger than his brother and that when one imposes one's will on a smaller person he could be written down as a bully.

Rupert, after viewing his mother with a youthfully sagacious eye, announced that *she* was older and bigger than he was and since

she was imposing her will on him it was plain enough that *she* was the bully.

He was equally dissident in his abhorrence of clothes, always happiest when he could go barefoot and always wanting his throat uncovered. His room was chronically untidy and littered with books. His appetite was capricious and his dietary experiments were the cause of many reprimands. His practical-minded and stern-spirited mother found much to deplore in her son's gypsy-like idleness and often had cause to be disturbed at both his restlessness and his too early tendency to toss stones, figuratively, through stained glass windows. This led to a monitorial attitude that lasted into the years.

It largely accounts, indeed, for his Shelleylike lack of sympathy with his own family and his repeated claim that his mother never really understood him. His love for her was always more vocal when he was far away from the home roof. That odd relationship between the occasionally unruly Rupert and his occasionally choleric mother remained a variable one. There was an obvious divergence of aim and outlook that often enough put a strain on affection, a grim reserve that clashed with careless and exuberant youth. If any deeper basic devotion existed between mother and son, it was a devotion that became more voluble, as has been implied, when they were not within the same walls.

For his more stable-spirited brother Alfred, who was to precede him at King's College, Rupert had both respect and admiration. There was a real bond between the two. And a common understanding of home conditions made them partners in campaigning to keep the domestic picture a tranquil one. Unless Alfred is put in that picture, the Provost of King's reported, the depiction of the family life would be out of focus. The contrast of the three characters was remarkable, acknowledged this onetime visitor at Bilton Road, but the dominant impression he harvested was that, with all their differences, the three were basically close to one another in an unparaded sort of understanding.

Yet a gulf remained between Rupert and his mother. We even find him more voluble in his expressions of affection for his nurse than for his parent, to whom was later attached the humorously tolerant epithet of "The Ranee." And if that managerial lady's love for the son on whom she pinned such high hopes was tangled up with repeated frustrations it must be written down to fundamental differences in character which even adoration could not bridge. Throughout his youth he remained a square peg in the round hole of British conformity, always thinking more of his family when beyond the periphery of parental authority.

The male head of that family, preoccupied with school duties as he was, seems to have given only perfunctory attention to the volatile boy who perplexed him by his changing moods and dismayed him by dissidences obviously unpalatable to the pedagogic mind. Yet William Parker Brooke was not entirely without humor. He could break into a parody of Swinburne when inviting a Miss Tottenham, who was his son's ex-governess, to come and spend Christmas week with them, where

> With puns that leave you smarting
> And hair that knows no parting
> Rupert your soul will vex!

The gulf here was not often bridged, however. And later in life Rupert could confess that he was without ancestor worship. He felt curiously unlike his parents and was often puzzled by a sense of remoteness from their aims and ideas, consoling himself with the claim that as an individualist he had his own way to go.

This conviction obviously left him a bit of a problem child. Notwithstanding his mental brightness and his ebullience of spirits that left him alternating between laughter and tears, he was far from robust. Throughout his youth, his mother tells us, he suffered from a throat ailment that left him allergic to dust and was the source of much family concern. And during his early years he

had his fair share of the passing tribulations of childhood, from croup and mumps to influenza and measles and pinkeye.

At the age of fourteen he entered Rugby, that historic school where a great granite slab on what is known as its Doctor's Wall describes a lighter phase of its history. "This stone," it reads, "commemorates the exploit of William Webb Ellis who with a fine disregard for the rules of football as played in his time, first took the ball in his arms and ran with it, thus originating the distinctive feature of the RUGBY GAME. . . . A.D. 1823."

Rupert was installed as a student in School House, where his father was Master, to pass back and forth through the same doors where "Tom Brown" was once carried shoulder-high on the last night of his life as a Rugby boy. And in that school the new boy was confronted by traditions as fixed as the names of earlier Rugbeians carved deep in the dark oak of the desks and dining-hall tables. There were many things to be done, and many not to be done. No lowly member of the school might ever cross the Quad on the stone paths that bisected the greensward; that path was sacred to masters and visitors.

The free-ranging Rupert had much to unlearn. He had by this time developed into a somewhat bookish boy, impressing his fellow students as shy and quiet, preferring to slip off to the Temple Library to lose himself in literary reviews rather than join in the games and junketings of his schoolmates. But he could leave his fellow Rugbeians popeyed by demonstrations of his remarkably prehensile toes, with which he could play marbles or toss a stone. At Rugby, it is recorded, he showed how with one simian foot he could take a match out of a matchbox and nonchalantly light it.

In the give and take of school life in a colony of six hundred unruly youths, in the fagging and ragging that persisted long after the *Tom Brown* era, the bashful boy lost a little of his once fixed tendency toward introversion. Although he had little enthusiasm for athletics he did his required stint on the playing fields of Rugby. His deeper interests were along other lines. He was never what might be called a school hero. He played tennis passably

well, it is true, and in time could participate creditably enough in cricket and football, playing on the School Cricket Eleven and the Football Fifteen. In the latter two sports he even had a hand in promoting the School Field players to "Cock House," which meant school championship. But he did not lose himself in the fanaticism for sports that surrounded him. He had a preference for more leisured walking tours and in later years developed a love for swimming, though his ambitions at diving remained a source of mixed anxiety and amusement to his more accomplished friends. He became, without distinction, a Cadet Officer in the Corps. But when, later on, a Cambridge associate suggested a mountain-climbing holiday in Switzerland, Rupert declined with thanks, protesting such rugged exercises were not for him. Yet his fondness for an open-air life was deep and enduring. Summer by summer, that golden-brown hair of his was invariably bleached to a lighter tone by the sun. And he remained boyishly proud of the tan which gave a much-desired touch of masculinity to an almost womanly peaches-and-cream complexion.

Religion, it is worthy of note, had little influence on him. In the School Chapel he could sing with ardency, though, as his discomfited fellow choristers kept reminding him, persistently out of tune.

Rupert's love for Rugby did not blind him to some of its anachronisms. He saw something incongruous in the weird architecture of the older buildings with their mock battlements and fifteenth-century castellated towers—making a wonderful place for clambering boys to hide—yet he learned to accept the general effect as one of solid and stolid impressiveness. The School Chapel with its Georgian Gothic, he saw, might fail to harmonize with the surrounding buildings, but there too the aura of tradition combined with the mellowing influence of time to soften earlier ugliness. For time went far back at Rugby, where boyish anglers who fished at Brownsover Mill could remember they were whipping a stream once whipped by Izaak Walton himself.

Changes were taking place in the young Master's son who both

loved and laughed at Rugby. He may have stood ready to make protests against what he called the conventional hypocrisy of the public school but he could not escape its influence. The stream caught him up and carried him along with his fellows. He became a member of that select circle dignified by the classic title of "Eranos," made up of only twelve members, restricted to the Sixth Form, more energetic spirits who filled up vacancies by "co-opting" and met regularly to read papers on literary subjects. The Lower Bench, as the Junior Class was termed, had an "Eranos" of its own, a larger and less-ardent group given over, not to creative writing, but to the mere reading of the poets.

It was natural that Rupert should become more bookish than ever. His reading, though not desultory, was centered more on the English poets than on the classics. After delving into Donne—a diversion that left its influence on him for many a year—he fell under the spell of the more decadent moderns, reveling in Oscar Wilde and Ernest Dowson and Swinburne. From these he came up to clearer air with Yeats and Kipling and Henley and Pater. But even in that transitional period when Beardsley and *The Yellow Book* seemed the final word in sophistication a salvaging sense of humor kept Rupert from altogether losing himself. With the catharsis of irony he could cleanse his spirit, as he did in the imaginary dialogue quoted by Edward Marsh in his *Memoir* (page xviii). In this narcissistic exercise in aestheticism, which originally came to light in a letter to Arthur Eckersley, he playfully pictures himself as an ennui-drenched victim of the current decadence.

"The Close in a purple evening in June. The air is full of the sound of cricket and the odour of the sunset. On a green bank Rupert is lying. There is a mauve cushion beneath his head and in his hand E. Dowson's collected poems bound in pale sorrowful green. He is clothed in indolence and flannels. . . . 'You talk wonderfully,' he says to his ghostly companion. 'I love listening to epigrams. I love to think of myself seated on the greyness of Lethe's banks and showering ghosts of epigrams and shadowy paradoxes

upon the assembled wan-eyed dead. We shall smile, a little wearily, I think, remembering.' "*

He emerged, in time, from the Narcissism of the Naughty Nineties, but, like a fever, that immersion in aesthetic morbidity had its after-effects. He confessed that, when he should have been busy with schoolbooks, he had written the first five chapters of an enormous romance, the opening sentence of which describes the moon as looking like an enormous scab on the livid flesh of a dropsical leper.

The budding poet, it is true, could burlesque the momentary cult of the morbid and satirize the vogue for arresting ugliness. It is equally true that his early intimacy with the authentic insurgents left him with an insurgency of his own. To the end of his life he liked to shock the Philistines and disturb the pious by unexpected profanities. His revolt against orthodoxy was not as fundamental as Shelley's; he had a housemaster father to be loyal to. But he early formed the habit of salting his porridge with Elizabethan coarsenesses, of acidulating his honeyed lyrics with unlooked-for cynicisms.

Rupert was already writing poetry at Rugby. He was associate editor of a typical school paper there called *The Phoenix* (which later became *The Venture*) and in its pages appeared a steady flow of adolescent verse from his pen. Those early efforts, naturally enough, show themselves as largely experimental and derivative.

"Intense surroundings," he wrote in April 1906 to St. John Lucas, "always move me to write in an opposite vein. I gaze on the New Big School, and give utterance to frail diaphanous lyrics, sudden and beautiful as a rose-petal. And when I do an hour's work with the Head-Master, I fill notebooks with erotic terrible fragments at which even Sappho would have blushed and trembled."

Behind this facade of irresponsibility, however, the young versifier was deep in a study of the older poets. Here and there in his outpourings one finds a golden line attesting to the sensitiveness of his ear. During his second year at Rugby, in fact, he publicly read

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a poem on "The Pyramids,"* a poem which just failed to achieve the school prize.

It was a schoolboy effort, marked by immaturities, halting in rhythm and a trifle overfacile as to rhyme. Yet in it was a sonorous sort of bigness, a youthful stretching toward the cosmic. In it too were passages that carried the promise of better things.

> Where on Egyptian sand the lone sun fades
> Hotly, and in the purple distance dies,
> Near the eternal Nile old Memphis lies
> Forgotten, and those three lone aeon-scarred
> Monuments, keeping immemorial ward,
> Dream of departed splendour and the shades
> Of old Regalities. . . .
> Thus will they stand and watch the mad world away
> Pulsing in endless haste,
> Till the red dawn of that last day
> When Earth shall vanish and the pale-starr'd waste
> Of Heaven, a robe out-worn, be cast away.

From the apocalyptic solemnity of its final lines we catch an echo of that prematurity which marked so much of this poet's adolescent verse and gave a note of world-weariness to many of his later efforts.

> Ah, when we muse upon the weight of years
> That cover these grey tombs, how petty seem
> The little things we dream,
> The tissue of our loves and hopes and fears
> That wraps us round and stifles us, till we
> Hear not the slow chords of the rolling spheres,
> The eternal music that God makes, nor see
> How on the shadow of the night appears
> The pale Dawn of the glory that shall be!

* After the public reading of "The Pyramids" on Speech Day at Rugby the young poet's mother, who had earlier rather opposed his addiction to writing verse, relented sufficiently to have Rupert's poem privately printed, as an unbound pamphlet, for presentation copies.

This early prize did more than leave him a marked man in that army of Philistines which thought more of Rugger and cricket than it did of iambic pentameter. It was a young tiger's first taste of blood. It sealed a decision that his life was to be devoted to song. While the Philistines were engrossed with football, which he deemed "a senseless game," he slipped away to his room and struggled with sonnets. After a series of them had appeared in the school paper he seems to have agreed with Schopenhauer that there was small virtue in groundless modesty.

CHAPTER 3

Where the Brook and River Meet

RUGBY CHAPEL could boast of the best organ in all the Midlands. Many an afternoon, during school term, a dark and slender-bodied youth could be seen at that organ, lost in the sonorous music with which he was filling the empty and gray-walled chamber.

That youth was Denis Browne, who, as a close and lifelong friend of Rupert, must not be dismissed with merely a passing word. Denis, in his way, was as gifted as his golden-haired schoolmate. What the one expressed with words the other expressed with music. Both, when they were on the brink of becoming master of their chosen art, were struck down by the hand of death.

Denis, the son of a music-loving Irish mother, at the age of five was able to play hymns on the home piano. His great joy, when he was little more than twice that age, was to make the rounds of the various churches in his home town of Leamington and coax the organists to let him play. He was so small that he had trouble in reaching the pedals, but his mastery of the keys was unimpeachable. He had been born with a perfect ear. By the time he was fifteen he was able to take over the choir practices and the entire services of his family church. When he entered Rugby he was well equipped to furnish the organ music for either Evensong or the more exacting Sunday service.

Denis was remarkable for more than his musical genius. He was a youth of rare charm, gentle and understanding and modest. He was clean-minded and idealistic, yet wholesomely mirthful and always companionable. It was foreordained, once he and Rupert got to know each other, that a Damon and Pythias relationship

should bind them together to the end of their tragically brief lives. Denis did settings for many of his friend's poems. He composed the music for Rupert's "Easter-Song," which was duly performed at morning chapel, as a voluntary, with Denis at the organ. Chapel, that Easter Sunday, was not so loathsome as usual to Rupert. The solemn setting for his words, in the manner of Elgar, so held him that he resented the steady clump of young boots up the aisle, making clamor enough to drown out the opening movement.

That partnership in creating beauty bound him closer to the quiet and sensitive Denis who, a year later, was to follow him to Cambridge and advance to the position of organist in the Clare College Chapel. He was also to furnish incidental music for the Marlowe Society productions in which Rupert was involved. Later, on the blindly blithe voyage to the ill-fated Dardanelles, it was Denis who pounded out cheering music on the battered old piano of the *Grantully Castle*. Before that final voyage to the Eastern Mediterranean he had won scholarships and given concerts and achieved recognition in London, where he was organist at Guy's Hospital when war broke out. Like Rupert, he brushed aside his one aim in life and responded to his country's call, only to be cut off, as was his friend and fellow artist, in his hour of greatest promise.

When on Speech Day at Rugby, in June of 1905, Rupert read a more successful prize poem before the assembled dons and distinguished visitors, Denis sat at a piano within ten feet of him, whispering reassuring words to the none-too-happy speaker. More than once a prize winner himself, he was elated that his running mate's poem "The Bastille," had carried off the honors for the year and its author was to be solemnly rewarded with a volume of Browning and one of Rossetti.

In that shyly read poem we see the craftsman a little surer of his tools, the prosodist a little airier in his lyrical interludes, though the optimistic note of the finale wakens the suspicion of a monitorial housemaster looking over the young poet's shoulder.

Sullen athwart the freedom of the skies
It frowned and mocked the sun's high pageantry,
Dawn of the cloudy hair and pleading eyes,
And the green sunset light,
With the dark threat of its immensity
And sinister portent of all-shrouding night.
. . . Still we grope
Blind in the utter night, yet dimly gleams
The star of an infinite tremendous hope
That there shall come an ending, that at last,
Somewhere beyond our dreams,
The Eternal Day, the Ultimate Goal shall be,
All mystery revealed, the old made new;
Where, the quest over, sin and bondage past,
Men shall be Gods, and every vision true.

It was not poetry, but a prose essay dealing with "The Influence of William III on England" that a year later brought Rupert his final school prize, the King's Medal For Prose, a triumph he was to repeat when he went up to Cambridge with a scholarship.

Notwithstanding these accruing honors Rupert was never entirely happy at Rugby. That restless spirit was never perdurably happy anywhere. He had his moments of ecstasy, his poet's moods of rhapsody. But he was always looking before and after and sighing for what was not. He was in Berlin, be it remembered, when he wrote his immortal "Grantchester." When in the grayness of London, he longed for the country. When in the country, he pined for the companionable excitement of the city. When seemingly happy in Samoa he hungered for England, and when back in his Warwickshire home he craved the South Seas again, just as he lamented the loss of Rugby after entering Cambridge.

In all his enthusiasms lurked a touch of the radical. He refused to accept life at the valuation of others. The objective world never quite lived up to his subjective ideals. He was eager for knowledge, but any canalized or classroom method of acquiring it went

against the grain. He had little love for Latin grammar, but his discovery of Theocritus was a joy to his youthful heart. He preferred pioneering through the past in his own elective way. He could heap scorn on the solemn pedagogues of Rugby, yet in a characteristic mood of melancholic nostalgia he could speak of the receding scene, so soon haloed by time, as the one bright spot in his life.

"I have been happier at Rugby," he confessed in a letter to Frances Cornford, "than I can find words to say. As I looked back at five years there, I seemed to see almost every hour golden and radiant, and always increasing in beauty as I grew more conscious; and I could not, and cannot, hope for or even imagine such happiness elsewhere. And then I found the last days of all this slipping by me, and with them the faces and places and life I loved, and I without power to stay them. I became for the first time conscious of transience, and parting, and a great many other things."*

It is a feeling, of course, not uncommon in many a graduating class in many a corner of the world.** In this case the idealizing tendency of the poet, one suspects, is coloring the picture to suit a passing mood. The note struck in an earlier letter was not so lyrical. He enviously asked how London was and announced that in Rugby the slushy roads and gray skies and epidemic mumps made New Big School *almost* bearable. Still later he wrote to Eddie: "The Rugby masters are beginning to return. They ask me what I have been doing . . . and illuminated by a kind of twilight knowledge look shocked, blush, and go away. And these are the people who have charge of my unconscious tender youth—and bid me read Pater! There are two classes of Rugby school-masters, those who

* From Edward Marsh's *Memoir*, page xi-xii, published by Sidgwick & Jackson Ltd.; copyright, 1918. Quoted by permission of Sir Edward Marsh and the publishers.

** Richard Halliburton on the eve of leaving Princeton had written in a kindred strain: "How alarmingly close the time is coming! How I would like to hold the sun in the sky and delay the summer a month or two! I'm so happy here now, more than I ever realized I could be." Like Rupert, Richard could contemplate age without enthusiasm. ". . . I can look forward to no joy in life beyond thirty. I see there the end of my ability to enjoy and love and *live*—it's only existence for me after that."

insult Beauty by ignoring it, and those who insult Beauty by praising it!"

The adolescent disdain of this schoolmaster's son for teachers in general is discernible in the four brief lines he wrote under the picture of another schoolmaster:

> For forty years he has taught Greek;
> He gets about four pounds a week.
> He speaks in patient monotones;
> His name is Jones.

He was restless with an intransigency all his own. Though still in his teens, his tumultous teens, he decided he had lost all the vain knowledge he had ever possessed and proposed going to London or Paris and "living for one year a life like a great red flame." As he knew nothing, he contended, he would have nothing to fear; and as he sought for nothing, all things would flock to him. He pictured himself as wreathing scarlet roses of passion round his brow and drinking the purple wine of beauty from the polished skull of some dead archbishop.

Then he remembered he was in England, and had a cold in the head and a heap of reading to do for his entrance to Cambridge.

Before Rupert went up to King's with his scholarship considerable changes had taken place in both his outlook and his activities. He lost his boyhood shyness and eventually discovered he had a genius for friendship. He still disdained the swimming and walking tours of his classmates. He became more of a favorite with the masters who knew and condoned his industrious idleness and was respected by the more bookish students, being notably active in the Eranos Society, where he read papers on modern poetry and led inconsequential debates on the merits of Swinburne and Dowson.

It was by this time common knowledge that he was dedicating himself to the esoteric paths of poetry and the admiration of more material-minded associates prompted him to affect certain singularities of dress. There was, at Rugby, a strict injunction against

colored neckties, but Rupert evaded the issue by taking to Byronic puff scarves that were arresting in their amplitude even though burdensome in their bigness. He resorted to blazers and flannels that would have delighted the bobby soxers of a later generation. He let his hair grow long, a mop of bleached and bright golden brown that crowned a singularly vivid face almost classical in its regularity of feature, and so perpetuated the time-honored tradition of poetry's relationship to pilosis. That crown of wavy gold, in fact, remained with him and marked him off from run-of-the-mill youths until he joined his country's fighting forces. Then Army regulations ordained a Samsonlike clipping of the tawny locks.

But Rupert, notwithstanding his efforts at self-derogation, was designed to be a conqueror. That sheer physical beauty, combined with a developing spirit of fun and an ever-radiant charm of manner, became a magnet that drew friends close about him.

In the summer of 1905 he went to Aldershot, where in the Public Schools' Camp he faced a short but strenuous course in military training, with much mud and discomfort, and a discipline more rigid than that of Rugby masters.

In the spring of 1906 his general health was impaired by an attack of ophthalmia. "I started this disease," he wrote to Erica Cotterill (April 1, 1906), "together with another lad in the House, rather badly. And as the San was full we were put into a room in the House. Our cases were obstinate and for a week we never improved. So Father got annoyed and one day when Dukes (the family doctor) was paying us his hurried visit, rushed in and accused him practically of being a fool and a careless ass, and many other things. Dukes replied in suitable terms. And the pair almost came to blows at the door. The other lad and I sat up in bed and cheered."

That quarrel, Rupert contended, did his eyes a lot of good. But his general condition remained so below normal that a change of scene and climate was indicated. When spring vacation came along he was given parental permission to join what he termed

"a large British band" of thirty rather jolly young people, mostly females, who journeyed to the Continent on a sort of circular return ticket that limited them to sixty days in Italy and fifteen more in France.

"Here," he wrote from 3 Via Bonifazio Lupi, Firenze, to St. John Lucas (February 10, 1905) "I am enjoying myself more than I thought I should. I have been spending much time in the galleries trying to cultivate an artistic eye. But . . . I have achieved nothing except a certain admiration for Botticelli, and even that I am bitterly disappointed to find fashionable. On Tuesday night we went out into the streets to watch the Carnival rejoicings. It was a peculiar sight, full of colour and noise, and very Italian. In the distance the scene had a certain fantastic charm. But when one saw the figures at close quarters they became merely vulgar. . . . The Piazza del Duomo was full of rather pathetic incongruity. Giotto's Tower swung upward grimly into the darkness, the summit invisible, the base surrounded by coloured lights and gay quick-moving figures and clouds of confetti."

If he was unhappy at times in Italy he found his dolor increased by a visit to Venice, which he described as full of stertorious Germans and Americans and crowded hotels and electric launches and the other evils that civilization seems to give. If he could admire the Giottos and muse contentedly in the vaporous gloom of St. Mark's he could be correspondingly restless in the galleries of Venezia.

"I was really miserable, being modern and decadent," he later wrote to Lucas (August 13, 1906). "And I hated all the Venetian painters, who are of the flesh and yet do not know that the most lovely flesh is that through which the soul shines. The stolid and respectable damsels of Bellini developed into the ponderous carnalities of Titian and Paolo. . . . The Venetians were never purely young and never beautifully decadent, but always in a tawdry middle-age."

One can overlook his indictment as to the "carnalities of Titian" just as one can condone the adolescent proclamation of decadence.

Rupert's letters, it must be remembered, were always keyed to the temper of their recipient. He strikes a more lyrical note after a side excursion to Fiesole, a Fiesole already romantic to his poet's heart through his reading of Robert Browning.

"I am filled by a cruel desire to torture you," he had written to his fellow poet, Lucas (February 10, 1905), "by describing at length an expedition we made yesterday to Fiesole. How we had tea on the hillside and squabbled over Browning and others. How the sun had begun to set over the plain and beyond Florence; and the world was very quiet; and we stopped talking and watched; and how the Arno in the distance was a writhing dragon of molten gold; and the sky the most wistful of pale greens."

To his own family, apparently, he was less communicative. That family had exacted from him a promise to write regularly. To fufill his promise Rupert purchased a stack of picture postcards, which day by day he mailed to the home address, with his initials on one corner and on the other a brief comment as to the weather. When the indignant family demanded impressions more personal and details more explicit, the young traveler, always the individualist, invested in a local guidebook from which he could extract safely appropriate facts and satisfactorily worded enthusiasms.

He was glad to head homeward by way of Verona, with a stop-off at Paris, where he waywardly longed for a glimpse of night life and a visit to Oscar Wilde's grave. Neither wish was gratified. Paris, at that time, was disturbed by labor riots and much loose talk about revolution. The young traveler's overanxious parents, remembering their son's occasional anarchical tendencies, sent word for his prompt return to England. The entire party, in fact, was hurried back to the assured safety of their precious stone set in a silver sea, after two meager days of holidaying in the French capital.

If Rupert's reports on this qualified "grand tour" were spasmodic and inconsequential it must be remembered he was still a schoolboy, though an increasingly articulate one. Notwithstand-

ing his claims of indolence, and the abbreviated family postcards, he always found time to write to those friends from whom he could expect understanding and to whom he could enlarge on both his mental troubles and his rhapsodic moods. It was not merely that he had the gift of words, and the further gift of wit. The voluminousness of his correspondence, even in his Rugby days, seems to be wrapped up with his rare power of winning friends—friends he hungered to hold close amid the shifting currents of life. A congenial craving for companionship persuaded him that estrangement could be written down as one of the greatest evils in a world that threatened to be as variable as his own altering moods. For a tendency to reverse earlier impressions, to dramatize some passing situation, to heighten the colors and deepen the shadows, is conspicuous enough in the letters written during his adolescence. Apparent, too, is his trick of burying boyish emotion under a meringue of cynicism, of shielding passing ardencies behind the mask of boredom. This touch of the histrionic is evident in letter after letter. In some he is plainly making an effort to sustain his reputation as a wit; in others he is intent on producing an impression of disillusionment with life and lost hope in the value of love. At one time he mourns that he may once have been a poet but is one no longer, contending that instead of being high and proud and hard he is actually small and shy and tired and old. Being both voluble and volatile, he naturally varied his note in response to the varied temperaments to which those letters of his were directed.

Typical of that transitional period between boyhood and manhood is the letter (April 14, 1905) he sent from Hastings to his school friend Geoffrey Keynes, who later became one of his literary executors:

"For the most part I have been leading the tranquil yet beautiful existence of a vegetable, eating much, sleeping much, thinking—not much! Tomorrow my eyes will be soothed by the sight of Rugby's vivid towers once more. As a matter of fact I have

roused myself sufficiently to write this that I may express in delicately chosen polysyllables my deep gratitude for your so kind criticism and reports on the feelings of the populace." (The reports were on his poem "The Bastille," which had been published in the school paper *The Phoenix* a few weeks before.) "Though of some literary merit, the poem was too long....The only tolerable thing at Hastings are the dinners at the hotel. They are noble. I had some soup tonight that was tremulous with the tenseness of suppressed passion; and the *entrees* were odourous with the pale mystery of star-light.... I am writing a Book. There will be only one copy. It will be inscribed in crimson ink on green paper. It will consist of fifteen small poems, each as beautiful, as perfect, and as meaningless, as a rose-petal or a dew-drop. When the book is prepared I shall read it once a day for seven days; then I shall burn the book—and die."

He did not die, of course, just as he did not write the book. But he revealed how he was still in that green-sick interregnum when imaginative youth is moodily experimenting with reality and floundering in uncertainties, both somatic and psychic.

CHAPTER 4

Cambridge and Change

THE newcomer to King's, introspective and self-absorbed, was not entirely happy in that clamorous new circle so deep in its own absorptions. The characteristic nostalgia for the receding scene made him think with envy of his Rugby days, and for friendship he leaned most heavily on two fellow students from the old school. A little of his earlier playfulness slipped away from him and a plaintive note crept into his letters. To his cousin Erica, with whom he had much in common, he sent a warning never to let his family know how miserable he was. If the knowledge that he loathed Cambridge ever reached his mother's ears, he confessed, it would mean worry to him as well as to his parents. One cause for his dislike of his new associates was their parade of cleverness which, ironically enough, kept them always dull and rarely wise.

The freshman at King's, after achieving a limited celebrity at Rugby, was temporarily subjugated by the larger life of the university. The newcomer's feeling of being an outsider, an invader of indecipherable traditions, put him on the defensive. He had small interest in the playing field and, for a time, little inclination for outdoor activities.

But a spirit so active could not be repressed. He still found classroom work obnoxious and the classics dreary. Required reading was a burden. Professors were a bore. Cambridge seemed like an underworld into which he had descended from the light and laughter of happier days. He was, as usual, looking before and after and sighing for what was not.

"At certain moments," he wrote to St. John Lucas from Cambridge's Union Society, "I perceive a pleasant kind of peace in the grey ancient walls and green lawns among which I live, a quietude that does not recompense for the things I loved and have left, but at times softens their outlines a little. . . . At the end of last week I went down for two days to Rugby and found that already I am very far away from them. So I have returned with a little disappointment to the hermit life here. These people are often clever and always wearying. . . . Here across the Styx we wander about together and talk of the upper-world, and sometimes we pretend we are children again, a little pitifully."

But the exile from Rugby was not as segregative as he pretended. Notwithstanding his unrest, essential adjustments were taking place. He was no longer sporting his oak. He could triumphantly inform his cousin Erica that if she came to Cambridge at the end of the month she would see a performance of the *Eumenides* in which an aged and gray-haired person called Rupert Brooke would be wearily taking the part of the "Herald." Slowly but surely, as had happened at Rugby, the roots were striking deeper in the new soil. He shook off a little of his earlier contemplative egoism and made an effort to adapt himself to his new environment. He gave less thought to the past and more to the future. For by now he had only one view in life. That was to be a writer. He began to learn the value of good connections, the need for knowing the right people, especially the right people in the preoccupied world of letters which he stood determined to invade. He decided to concentrate, with Keatslike grimness, on the business of being a poet.

The decadent posture still persisted. He could boast of being still deep in Verlaine and Baudelaire and Dowson and Swinburne, just as he could boast of his college "digs" being decorated with Beardsley drawings. He confided to Geoffrey Keynes that he was busy draping his study, which was to be the Eighth Wonder for the coming term, covered with rugs and draperies in various

shades of green, pale and sorrowful in effect. All the bookshelves were to be filled with volumes of minor poetry.

To his other good friend, St. John Lucas, he sent a letter reiterating his leaning toward the dark flowers of decadence. "My room," he wrote, "is a quaint Yellow Book wilderness with a few wicked little pictures scattered here and there. The bookshelves are numerous and half empty. But it was rash in you to inquire what books I still needed.... I want, for instance, to complete my set of the three great decadent writers, Oscar Wilde, St. John Lucas, and Rupert Brooke. Of the last and the most infamous of the three I possess most of the works, but of the other two I have less. But perhaps those would have a too bad influence on me. I have none of Belloc's ridiculous works; the madder Elizabethans would please me; and if you dare find some of your evil Frenchmen of the more decadent sort they would delight my wicked mind. A complete set of the most infamous of Beardsley's drawings might be purchased for about fifty guineas in Paris and would certainly bring a stream of faint interest in my wan eye."

That the moody and emotional freshman at King's was still at loose ends was evidenced by a later letter to Geoffrey Keynes, who, remembering the natural gaiety behind his friend's mask of gloom, had advised Rupert to give up the pose of discontent and take to optimism. The advice, obviously, was not accepted, the budding poet claiming he was pleased with his "pessimistic uncertainty."

"A week today I return to Cambridge," he wrote Geoffrey Keynes, "and then I shall find all the witty and clever people running one another down again. And I shall be rather witty and rather clever and I shall spend my time pretending to admire what I think is humourous or impressive in me to admire and attempt to be 'all things to all men', faintly athletic among athletes, a little blasphemous among blasphemers, slightly insincere to myself. However, there are advantages in being a hypocrite, aren't there? One becomes God-like in this at least: that one laughs at all the other hypocrites."

That he was still adrift in the indecisions of adolescence is made plain by his moody declaration that he had finally given up all kinds of writing, except the writing of letters. There were, he decided, only ten beautiful words in the language, and he had used them all. Since there remained only one subject on which he could write, and he had written on that too often, he felt it was time to abandon letters and devote the rest of his life to being a parish beadle or a pork butcher, if not a mere M.P. or a suicide.

At Cambridge, as at Rugby where the classics and field sports were still regarded as more important than the test tube and the T square, he had to harvest any knowledge of his own ethereal art in the hard way, lamenting the curricular diffidence to modern literature and the absence of any official guidance in the intricate maze of versification. He could complain with Osler that he was climbing Parnassus in a fog. Poetry writing, in a circle where classes were spoon-fed on the syntax and prosody of dead languages until striplings loathed Xenophon and Homer and until Cicero and Livy became merely tasks, turned into a sort of personal campaign in which he learned through trial and error and grew wiser through tangled defeat and triumph. His one help, he found, was to resort to a careful study of those who had already fought their way up the slope, from Webster to Watson and from Donne to Davidson.

When bedridden during the Christmas vacation (1906-1907) he confessed, in a letter to his cousin Erica, that he was as bored by idleness as by college work. "I have just read through *Plays Pleasant* again and feel more certain than ever that *Candida* is the greatest play in the world. These holidays have been paltry and pottering as usual. The only thing of interest is that Gertrude Lindsay has been drawing me.... It represented me as of a round, fat, youthful, chubby, and utterly contented face, instead of the gaunt, sallow, aged, haggard, thin expression at which I always aim."

There was, plainly, a touch of exhibitionism in Rupert's lapses into world-weary listlessness. He hungered for enchantment, yet



Rupert and his younger brother Alfred with their boyhood pet known as Trim



Rupert at Rugby.



As a lieutenant in the Royal Naval Division.

he was ready to toy with the macabre. He was willing to agree with Sir Thomas Browne, in his overardent plea for incineration, that he would rather be reduced to ashes and put in an urn than have his skull turned into a drinking cup and his shinbone made into a pipe.

It is not easy to unveil the cause of Rupert's cyclic psychoses of depression and exaltation. The Aprilian melancholy of youth may be far from the autumnal gloom of age, but to dismiss the poet's addiction to morbidity as mere play acting would be as unsound as placing too much stress on the therapeutic value of self-dramatization. Impulsive, overstrung, always fearless, yet bewildered to the end, he faced the double frustration of a body not robust enough to withstand the emotional demands of a heart and mind that expected too much of life. He tried to learn from Pater the trick of passing from point to point and always being present at the focus where the greatest vital forces united in their purest energy, of maintaining ecstasy and burning with a hard and gem-like flame. But he learned too early the impermanence of passion. Life too abandonedly lived had its reactions of ennui. One inner tragedy of his career seems to repose not so much in the clouded penalties of promiscuity as in the embittering cynicism that all but turned him into a misogynist and weighed early and heavy on his impulses of lyricism. Another and deeper tragedy was his youthful surrender to a belief in the purposelessness of life. Rebellious and undisciplined, he became increasingly restless and increasingly in search of wider personal experience. He moved by indirection, but he was never torpid. The virtues of placidity he was always willing to bequeathe to those who were satisfied with Buddhistic inaction. He confessed that he was a mere hand-to-mouth liver, but his enormous appetite for sensation faced him with the ironic discovery that he was peeling the onion of life until little remained in his hands. He was to find nothing aimless in the world—except the world itself. Relief he sought from time to time in those preliminary excursions to reality spoken of as returns to nature. But with the wayward irreverence of youth

he continued to mock at the gods who had given him so much. Only two things, beyond all the adolescent indecision and misdirection, remained sacred with him. One was his Mother England; the other was the art to which he had dedicated his young life. And it took a World War to save him from the disaster of insincerity.

One extramural activity that earlier helped to normalize Rupert a little was his awakening interest in drama. Equally influential in bringing the brooding aesthete temporarily down to earth was his ever-growing participation in undergraduate dramatics. His interest in the stage stayed with him through all his years. His one great wish was to write a play and see it produced. Yet his only professional production was the one-act entitled *Lithuania,* which was put on by his friend Maurice Browne at the Little Theatre in Chicago and later had a brief run at His Majesty's Theatre in London.

Opinion is divided as to Rupert's acting. When he joined Cambridge's Amateur Dramatic Club he was consigned to the unimportant part of "Stingo" in *She Stoops to Conquer.* Equally small, during his first term, was his part in the *Eumenides,* where he was first assigned to the role of "Hermes" but was soon demoted to the part of the "Herald," in which he made a brief appearance in cardboard armor and a red wig. His task was to stand in the middle of the stage and blow a prop trumpet while somebody in the wings produced the necessary sound. His costume of vivid red and blue and gold may have made him look like a page in the Riccardi Chapel but his nervousness and his limited knowledge of stagecraft made him a none too persuasive *bucinator.*

His Cambridge friends were united in their opinion that Rupert was not a second Irving. Some reported that he had an expressive quality of voice and an exceptional power of employing it, but was without any definite talent for acting. As in his public speaking, an audience embarrassed him. Any charm perceptible

in rehearsals was lost when it came to actual performance. Yet he refused to accept defeat as a thespian.

Reginald Pole, Rupert's friend and fellow student at King's, who later became an actor and director of eminence, acknowledged that the youth from Rugby was not a good actor but claimed no one could more impressively deliver a poetic line. "He had no essentially histrionic gift," Pole concluded, "but he delivered poetry quite beautifully. When he played 'Mephistophilis' in the first performance of Marlowe's *Faustus* the dramatic passages were poorly done but the lyric ones were always sufficiently effective. Also when he played the Attendant Spirit in Milton's *Comus* at the New Theatre in Cambridge, he triumphed more in the declamation of poetry than in drama."

Arthur Benson, who stood close enough to Rupert to size him up as both an actor and an individual, has acknowledged that his stage appearance was striking, with his thick-clustering golden-brown hair and his handsome features, but that his voice was ineffective and monotonous. Nor was the poet unconscious of that arresting appearance, dressing as he did in a flamboyant fashion, expressing his love of color in blue shirts and matching blue ties or funereal black flannel with a flash of red at his throat.

Yet Benson's conclusion was that Rupert remained free of vanity and enjoyed his own picturesqueness very much as he enjoyed his bodily health and his alertness of mind, appearing to his friends to have the unaffected qualities of a child, marked as he was by simplicity and directness and faithfulness in friendship. He was humorous and outspoken, and if he was frankly fond of happiness he was equally fond of sharing it with others. Not that his friends found him faultless. He was responsive to praise but he was also accessible to flattery. His impulses were generous and yet his criticisms could be acid. After breakfasting with Thomas Hardy he could speak disparagingly of that master's thin and pessimistic voice and report that his conversation was restricted to complaints about the toast. After a hurried visit to Washington, later in his

short life, he could acknowledge that Wilson had a nice face for an American, with wrinkles and lines about the mouth that seemed to say the man had sometimes felt something—which, he asserted, was extraordinarily rare in an American. His aversion to prudery sometimes led him to overfrank confessions of sex impulses that gave a shock to his friends and a more long-circuited shock to the readers of his poems. When far from home, in a moment of introspection he discovered that the real reason why he dropped in a theatre or music hall every evening was merely to see and observe females. He complained that he didn't come across many in that itinerant life of his and the unconscious part of him "got very thirsty." It was, he confessed, rather disgraceful but he plaintively concluded that most men were like that.

It was during his earlier stage experiences at Cambridge that Rupert met Helen Verrall, with whom he later lightheartedly concocted and produced a boisterous comic opera, *An Uproar In Three Acts,* put on during the Christmas season holidaying at the Hotel Schweizerhof, in Lenzerheide, Switzerland. Miss Verrall's mother, referring to the performance, remarked on Rupert's repose while on the stage, and his ease and absence of self-consciousness.

That these excursions into theatredom were sometimes more of a frolic than a serious study of histrionics seems borne out by the aftermath of the second performance of *Faustus* in 1910 when, in honor of a visiting delegation of German students, the entire cast imposed a party on the not-far-distant home of the Cornfords in Madingley Road. That home, on the outskirts of Cambridge, was a gathering place of undergraduates who found the scholarly Francis Cornford a quiet yet kindly host and his wife Frances (the daughter of Sir Francis Darwin) a frail but fluent writer of verse keenly interested in fellow writers. Her husband—"The best Greek scholar in Cambridge"—achieved renown for his interpretation of the thought and spirit that lay under the surface of ancient philosophy, especially that of the Pre-Socratics. He was a music lover who learned to play the viola at fifty, the parent of

brilliant children whom he allowed to go their own way, or, as he expressed it, "to sail away like ships."

Denis Browne and Rupert were always welcome guests in that often tumultous house of music and poetry and lighthearted young people. Frances Cornford, in fact, with an appreciation of Rupert's possibilities, was ever ready with sympathy and advice when the wayward young poet from Rugby seemed uncertain as to his aims and intentions. Their friendship remained unselfish and unshaken to the end.

The impromptu celebration after the final *Faustus* performance was far from academic in its lack of dignity. A charabanc had been hastily hired and stationed outside the theatre, and everyone, still in costume, piled in, with the Seven Deadly Sins crowding the Devils, and the Pope, slightly intoxicated with excitement and beer, going up and down the line of revelers and, with two fingers upheld, solemnly blessing them each in turn. Helen of Troy, left behind, commandeered a bicycle and pedaled furiously after the speeding charabanc. Rupert, who had been cast as the Chorus, found his flowing black gown, cut like a medieval scholar's cloak, both cumbersome and out of character for such a frolic. So from the property room he quickly appropriated a close-fitting purple doublet and fleshings and adorned his head with a gold-painted paper crown as bright as his own long hair.

Once assembled at the Cornfords' Conduit Head garden, the carnival crowd feasted on sandwiches and cider, after which they danced gaily about a huge bonfire, to the ironic exclusion of the fifty visiting Germans for whom the riot had first been planned. The crowning moment came when an enterprising spirit slipped away from the group and returned with a bundle of torches. A torchlight procession was promptly arranged, at two o'clock in the morning, and one lone cyclist pedalling along Madingley Road was the solitary and startled spectator of that mystifying faggot-bearing throng.

A shadow fell across this youthful jollity and brought to Rupert a grief not of his own making. It must have been his first great

sorrow. His elder and more stable-minded brother Dick (affectionately known to the family as Podge) for whom he had a great respect and a great love, died suddenly. Dick, unlike Rupert, had a mathematical mind and a leaning toward the commercial life. He was the dependable member of the family staidly associated with a Welsh business house in Pembrokeshire when overtaken by his final illness.

"It seems strange," Rupert wrote to St. John Lucas (June 22, 1907), "that you haven't heard. I had thought that all the world must know. I suppose I ought to have written and told you; but there were so many letters to write, and I had to try to comfort Mother a little. Dick died on Sunday the 13th after a week's illness. Father was with him—but I don't think details matter much."

The blow to Rupert's family—it sent both the stricken parents to bed for a time—was made more poignant by the receipt of a letter written on the very day of Dick's death.

"The head of the firm for which he had been working," Rupert confided to Lucas, "who had not even heard of his illness, was writing to Mother. We got the letter the next morning. He praised Dick very much, and ended with: 'Your son has *just finished* at Pembroke, where he has done very well. We have found another job for him.' It's the sort of ironical coincidence one reads in a book and winces at."

The heavyhearted Rupert, after the funeral, slipped away from Rugby and went up to Cambridge, to escape, he confessed, old school friends and their abortive efforts to console him in his grief. He wanted to be alone. He was, in fact, on the brink of one of his periodic illnesses.

"When you last saw me," he said in a letter to his cousin Erica (May 21, 1907), "I wrote and talked very smartly of death and separation and such things. Now I have known them. And it hurts. And I'm puzzled and tired; and there's nothing to be done. But I'm not really always miserable, or thinking I am. I mislead you. But you see when I'm with Father and Mother, or writing to them, I have to be cheerful and happy. They're so unhappy already. I don't want to add to it. So when I turn to

others I work off my accumulated gloom on them. Selfish, perhaps, but in some ways it is better than storing it up!"

He complained of being infinitely old and wise and no longer believing in God. But in spite of a wretchedness of mind and body, that overrestive spirit could not be idle. He buried himself in work. He sat up late into the night carpentering together more poetry—"great slabs of minor poetry," as he puts it—for the *Cambridge Review*. When his cousin rebuked him for burning the candle at both ends he accused her of suffering from the delusion that he worked too hard for his health, explaining that he might fall ill of a broken heart or of perpetual misanthropy or even of the Cambridge climate, but never, never would he go under from too much work.

He was wrong in this, as time was to show. And his reiterated proclamations of idleness ring a little hollow in view of the industry with which he labored at his versemaking, and at his novels and plays that were never finished, just as the impact of those poems of Horace which advocate a life of carefree idleness is somewhat lessened by the discovery of how much toil it took to evolve chiseled lines so eloquent in their plea for laziness. This overardent young Englishman, in fact, seemed always to participate in the Celtic prerogative of being happy in the pursuit of unhappiness, the purely Irish ability to wring satisfaction out of sorrow. He could boast of a permanent look of resigned melancholy. He could complain that his heart was burned out and his brain had gone dry. But he could always lose himself in his creative work and be eager for what response it brought from his friends.

Rupert's first Long Vacation was both a troubled and a tranquil one. A part of it was spent at Lulworth, a Dorset village on the English Channel. There he sat in the sun and bathed and read dead and decaying languages, finding the place tiresomely backward and old-fashioned, with only downs and rocks and green water. There were no piers and no promenades, not even a band to drown out the drone of the surf.

But it was at Lulworth that Severn and Keats once came ashore

and clambered about the rocks when their Italy-bound ship lay becalmed in the Channel. So it seemed appropriate that yet another poet, nearly a century later, should tread the same shingle and sit on the same rocks with a volume of Keats in his hand.

The book fell into the sea and was carried out of reach. Rupert, whose enthusiasm for swimming was just awakening, stripped and went after it. It was a struggle against tide and rough water in which the young poet might easily have been drowned. He returned with the sodden volume, however, relieved to remember that it had cost him only two shillings.

During this Long Vacation he was not as idle as he pretended, though the ivy of indolence still façaded the walls of industry. He protested, with inconsequential flippancy, that every day he worked hundreds of hours on stuffy classics and oozed with grammar, and to save his soul wrote thousands of poems in the evening, poems which he promptly burned.

But that was another proclamation a little wide of the mark, for Rupert, like Byron, sometimes had "a short armistice with Truth." He by no means burned all his poems. Many of them were mailed on to those friends on whom he counted most for guidance and encouragement. It was a gradually widening circle of both men and women who were ready with praise and criticism, susceptible as they must have been to the winning personality of the young artisan in words and responsive as they must have been to the signs of genius in his still experimental efforts. And with that gradually widening circle he began to lose the feeling of being submerged. His latent power to attract and win approval was not slow in bringing him out of a passing mood of sequestration and surrounding him with loyal companions. Of him Reginald Pole, his contemporary at King's, could write: "He was one of the few utterly real and rare personalities whom I have ever met with and during my life since I have never met a poet to match him for simple, unaffected communication of truth, unashamed as he was of every emotion which might ripple over the surface of his mind. He would have delighted the heart of Walt

Whitman by his naïve sincerity and his independence of feeling and thought."

The Long Vacation of 1907 was epochal because of another loyal friend who abruptly entered Rupert's life just as that summertime vacation was opening. This was Edward Marsh, who met him at Cambridge and, like many others, soon succumbed to the charm of the loquacious and long-haired King's student. To the older man that student, with his ardent and unshielded emotionalism, must have seemed tragically unprepared for the impending battle of life. It was a case where a helping hand was plainly called for. And the discerning man of affairs who was never too busy to forget he was also a lover of beauty promptly drew the young poet into the circle of his interests.

It was a remarkable friendship that ripened steadily and lasted until Rupert's death. But it was more than mere companionship. Edward Marsh became the younger man's counselor and critic, his guide and mentor. He not only encouraged Rupert to keep on at his versewriting but he also frankly pointed out occasional weaknesses in early efforts and argued against those recurring coarsenesses which Rupert refused to regard as literary impertinences and defiantly imposed on many an otherwise happy lyric.

He did much more than this. He reviewed Rupert's small book of verse when it appeared and came to his defense when a captious critic attacked that volume for its "sickly animalism." Later on he acted as an unofficial emissary between the wandering singer and impatient editors. He even undertook the task of managing the publication of a succeeding volume or two. From his secretarial post of vantage at 10 Downing Street, where so much English history had been made, he engineered many contacts for the young poet, both professional and social. The nomadic undergraduate of Cambridge was always welcome at No. 5 Raymond Buildings in Gray's Inn, that tree-shadowed bayou of calm beyond the clatter and glare of Holborn where in the inner iron-gated old garden, the garden that Wilfrid Gibson once called the heart of London, there was timeless peace in the midst of tur-

moil. Even the dusty and smoke-darkened trees, beyond the lodge porter and the gloomy offices, lifted valorous branches up to the filtered sunlight and proclaimed that man could find serenity in a world of tumult.

There Rupert found rest and a much-needed bed awaiting him. From there, too, the still eager explorer of London life was piloted to the Russian Ballet and the West End theatres and the revues for which he had a boyish fondness and the art galleries where his host's passion for pictures was shared by the younger man who soon found his weakness for Beardsley eclipsed by an appreciation of Augustus John.

There were, as well, dips into Bohemia and happy evenings in the midst of London's literati. Rupert, indeed, carried his own key to Eddie's flat, free to come and go as he willed. There were times when its sleeping accommodations were grotesquely overtaxed. Many a celebrity slept there and many a night was spent in Parnassian arguments and the discussion of poets and poetry in a newer era that was proving itself more troubled and more questioning than the era of the more placid-minded Victorians. Hardy and Housman had already retreated to the gloomier irony of the Uncertain, and the philosophy of the Absolute, deriving from Hegel and Royce, was merging into the incertitudes of Santayana and the pragmatism of William James. Wells and Shaw were jolting their generation out of old placidities, and Jeans and Eddington were preparing to make thought more cosmologic.

There was much to talk about, in these midnight seances remote from the roar of London. When space separated the two good friends with so much in common, their communion was maintained and their companionship was endorsed by a continuous interchange of letters. Through them can be seen the devotion and the unselfish campaigning of the older man to help the aspiring singer along the clouded path of celebrity. And when the singing was over that deep and lasting friendship was crowned by the writing of the *Memoir* that stood a worthy tribute to a lost comrade sleeping on Skyros.

CHAPTER 5

The Widening Circle

RUPERT, as he emerged from his teens, realized that the ruminating years of his adolescence had not brought him the fullness of life for which he plainly hungered. While he could never be accused of barrenness of spirit, his youthful attitude toward the world about him had remained largely that of an introvert. He was more interested in scenery and sensations than in the human drama that was so soon to change the face of England.

He had once proclaimed that there were only three good things in the world: to read poetry; to write poetry; and to live poetry. At another time, although he had said his occupation was in being in love with the universe, he expressed satisfaction with days in which he could talk eight hours, read eight hours and sleep eight hours.

That the life of a peripatetic philosopher in tweeds was not altogether satisfactory and that absorption in books was not bringing him the *bien vivre* he demanded is apparent in a letter he wrote at his twentieth birthday.

"I am now in the depth of despondency because of my age," he lamented in a letter to Frances Cornford. "I'm filled with an hysterical despair to think of fifty dull years more. I hate myself and everyone. I've written almost no verse for ages; and shall never write any more. I've forgotten all rhythm and meter. The words 'anapaestic dimeter acatalectic' that fired me once now leave me cold. The sunset on a child's face no longer reminds me of a bucolic caesura. But I still read plaintively, to pass the time."

This may be written down as a passing mood. But it was a strangely recurring one. Again and again, during the ensuing

eight years before his death, Rupert is found lamenting the ravages of Time and registering a distaste for old age. Reiterated too, in spite of his zest for living, is the thought of an early death, a fate which he seems to have viewed without apprehension.

Neither preoccupation with prosody nor reposing on mauve cushions in a river punt and imbibing Meredith's *Modern Love* and bottled beer was bringing him what he demanded of life. With the coming of manhood he nursed a growing distaste for dilettantism. He felt the need of linking up with his fellows.

As a student at Rugby, it is true, he had had his frolic in politics. But his interest in the Labor Party (of which he was reputedly the school's chief advocate) was abstract and academic. It was about as abstract as his interest in the old game of "Up Jenkins" which he played on one occasion, and when it came his turn to order all hands down on the table (leaving the players to guess which hand covered the hidden sixpence) he sat silent and voiceless, staring at the serried hands. When aroused by the cries of the impatient players for action, Rupert shook back his hair, smiled an apology, and dreamily exclaimed: "Oh, but hands are so *beautiful!*"

Yet from Rugby he had written to Geoffrey Keynes: "I am now hopelessly involved in politics. Every night I go down to the Liberal Club and cheer at the results of the polls. I am even editing an election paper, 'The Rugby Elector,' which appears on alternate days in the Liberal interests. It is full of cheap and low gibes . . . which proceed from my middle-class imagination. The whole thing is ridiculously English."

This note is repeated in another letter to Keynes (January 19, 1906), to whom he wrote with a flippancy that one must accept as largely defensive.

"Isn't this absurd and delightful? We are having a ferocious fight down here in which I am taking a great part. I edit a paper which is produced every other day, in the Liberal interest. . . . You can figure me covered with Liberal rosettes, marching about the town and discussing the political situation with all the most rabid Tories. I have made forty-seven mortal enemies in four days. And

the immense joke of the matter is that I really take no interest in politics at all."

Rupert's maturing mind, in the atmosphere of Cambridge, left him less flippant in the face of slowly realized social problems. Fabianism, about the time he went up to King's, was at its high tide. The Fabian Society, appropriately named after Fabius Cunctator, "The Great Delayer," had come into existence in London in 1883, its policy being gradually "To reconstruct society in accordance with the highest moral principles." Within a decade, thanks to the pamphleteering and lecturing of George Bernard Shaw and Sidney and Beatrice Webb, Fabian societies were formed throughout England. Sidney Webb, affectionately known as "Nanny" because of his thin, small voice, did more than any politician of his era in changing public thought on social and political issues. He and his loquacious intellectuals, with their Sunday evenings of coffee and crumpets and argument, were unofficially preparing Britain's middle class for the Attleeism that was later to alter the structure of the state. The once derided Fabians eventually merged with the Independent Labor Party and at the General Election of 1906 startled the country into realizing Socialism was a coming factor in politics, as later history has proved.

The movement acquired much strength through affiliated societies at Cambridge and Oxford, since it drew into its ranks men of thought who through their plays and lectures and writings brought its doctrines before a much wider public, until, after the end of the First World War, England's Labor Party overshadowed and left less articulate the once ultravocal Fabians. What the gradualists of sixty years ago called Fabianism the later generation now involved in government accepts as the "democratic approach."

Although Rupert could lament, at the end of his first Long, that he had to go back to King's for his second year and on that airless Cambridge plain laugh and talk with his dull university associates, he could not altogether resist the tug of the convivial currents that eddied about him. In November he was elected, by

an impressive majority, to the Committee of the Fabians. Many of the members of that committee were Newnhamites whom he regarded as strange wild females ready to be infuriated by the all-round incompetence of their new associate.

He actually aroused no fury in the ardent young women from Newnham, but, on the other hand, the group who were so intent on the liquidation of Victorianism and its outmoded shams and fallacies aroused a merely modified enthusiasm in Rupert. Socialism, he saw, was at that time making ponderable advances at both Cambridge and Oxford, but its upholders impressed him as threatening to make it seem merely a selfish scheme of economics. They were accepting a Compulsory Living Wage as an end in itself and not as a beginning. George Bernard Shaw, it was true, had been enthusiastically received when he invaded Cambridge and made a speech in which he advocated a state of things where each class and each interest should have its own party in Parliament fighting for its own hand. But Rupert was not swept away by that policy. It struck him as too largely based on selfishness to be inspiring.

The Shavian "exploder of complacency" was not so impressive on the platform, to the King's College scholar, as he was in his plays, a point which must be reserved for later consideration. The young Epicurean, so aloof from trade and commerce, could not find everything to his liking in the new movement.

It was to his uncle, Clement Cotterill (the author of *Human Justice to Those at the Bottom*), he was able to write: "Of course they're really sincere, energetic, useful people, and they do a lot of good work. But, as I've said, they're rather hard. Must every cause lose part of its ideal as it becomes successful? And also they are rather intolerant, especially towards the old order. They sometimes seem to take it for granted that all rich men (and all Conservatives and most ordinary Liberals) are heartless villains. I have already, thanks in part to some words of yours, got some faith in the real, sometimes overgrown, goodness of all men; and that is why I have found your book so good, as a confirmation

rather than a revelation. And this faith I have tried to hammer into those Socialists of my generation whom I have come across. But it's sometimes hard. The prejudices of the clever are harder to kill than those of the dull. Also I sometimes wonder whether this commercialism, or competition, or whatever the filthy infection is, hasn't spread almost too far, and whether the best hope isn't in some sort of upheaval."

Here we see yet another of his resemblances to Shelley, the Shelley who once advocated the abolition of commerce. Each of these otherworldly poets temporarily took to vegetarianism; each disliked the restriction of codified life as much as he abhorred a collar about his neck. And each was forever sighing for what was not.

But Rupert failed to shine as a leader of the proletariat. On the platform and in the heat of debate (as in his acting) the verse-maker who could mold a golden phrase on paper was not altogether at his ease.

"I don't think anything I say is much good," he confessed to his cousin Erica in a moment of self-examination, "for I often think I don't know how the mind of anybody else works. My own point of view is this: *How* one says things is very important. For, I often find, when I have something in me I want to tell people I fail through being unable to find the right words; and so I give people the wrong impression. The great thing is *to make other people understand what one means.* So merely to blurt it out and understand it oneself does not do, I find. So, for myself, I always go very slowly and carefully, telling a little every now and then, picking my time. And this is because I have to feel my way. I know neither how other people think, nor how to express my own thoughts at all well.... This is the difficulty which makes me very rarely speak to a lot of people at once, and when I do, say almost nothing of importance. Because, as crowds are stupider than individuals, and I am bad at public speaking, I cannot feel I make them understand."

Rupert was too dynamic and too mentally aggressive to escape

entirely the dingy microcosm of undergraduate politics, though his interests there remained less enduring than his preoccupation with poetry. It was too early in that opening half century of England's bloodless revolution for him to be fully aware of how his world was to change, though he could not escape the conviction that he had been born in both a bewildered and a bewildering era. It was an era that, to him, seemed to have lost the guidance of an established church and the fortitude once drawn from that church's teachings. And it is natural that he, like his age, should find himself temporarily adrift on a sea of spiritual skepticism. The one faith that remained with him was faith in his Empire. He was never a Kiplingesque trumpeter of its greatness, but he declined to look on any twilight grayness that might be creeping into England's glory.

The Fabian Society, which aimed to make over a troubled world, held his interest for a time. He was elected President of the Cambridge Branch of that Society for the academic year of 1909-1910. That, however, was not his only group activity. His growing love of the theatre, which took him dodging off to London in Norfolk jacket and well-worn flannel trousers to glimpse any passing play from a cheap seat in the gallery or pit, also lured him into the fold of Cambridge's amateur dramatic society, where he proved a good worker but never a distinguished actor. He became a member of the Heretics, a typical undergraduate discussion group of would-be revolutionaries who burned much midnight oil and enumerated many plans for the reform of both life and letters.

He was, as well, a charter member if not a cofounder of a select little group known as The Carbonari. This baker's dozen of companionable spirits included such names as Hugh Dalton, Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Attlee Cabinet, and Arthur Waley, renowned translator of Chinese and Japanese poetry. The meetings of this exclusive little club, despite its inflammatory title, were more literary than revolutionary, taking place in the rooms of the different members, to the accompaniment of bread and cheese

and much beer. There sporadic efforts in verse and laboriously prepared papers were read aloud, followed by discussions that were as solemn as they were prolonged. Sometimes, in fact, the arguments lasted until the break of day. For, like other youths within other college walls, these seekers after the eternal verities took themselves seriously. They felt that now was the time for the solution of all ancient problems. And Rupert, with a number of the more voluble of his argumentative group, would walk around the courts or pace beside the river doing what they could to get things clear. They decided, under the ageless stars, that the job should be done quickly and finally, before they might be too preoccupied with life to think or too wearied with age to care.

That quest for the good, the true and the beautiful seemed as important to Rupert as it had to Plato and Aristotle. He decided that ethics was the important thing and relegated metaphysics to the trivial, contending that what was *real* seemed of less moment than what was *good*. He agreed with Plato that the right life is one which is directed by reason, yet was firm in his claim that poetry could solve all problems of conduct and settle all questions of value.

A fellow Carbonaro who took part in those discussions has described how one night when they were deep in their Socratic exchange of ideas they heard some drunken members of another college going boisterously back to their rooms. Rupert, studying them, announced the roisterers would have regarded the Carbonari as very old, if they had been in the same room with them that night. But when the playboys of the campus went forth to warm their office stools, he contended, they would find themselves old and listless, while the Carbonari deep thinkers, alive to the realities of life, would always be young.

In one way Rupert *was* always young. Even in manhood he retained a touch of the boy, a quick resentment against too-officious coercion, a hatred of priggishness, a casual flair for the indecorous, as exemplified in the graceful carelessness of the tweed-clad figure and the fixed habit of preferring a floor rug or a slope of grass to

the most comfortable of padded armchairs. He retained, to the end, a child's delight and a child's curiosity in the color and taste and feel of things, just as he retained a habit, more marked in the fair sex, of arriving at convictions by emotional rather than by intellectual processes. As in that endless reconnaisance known as childhood, he still saw the world as something halfway between a picture book and a playground.

It was his sharpening interest in the playground of the theatre that now began to shake him out of some of his moodiness. His study of the Elizabethan dramatists had already interested him in Marlowe, and his longing to act, born of earlier ventures at Rugby, still slumbered in his restless soul. So when Justin Brooke (three years older than Rupert and not a relative) formed and was made president of an undergraduate acting group to be known as the Marlowe Dramatic Society the poet was glad to accept an invitation to be a member. The first ponderable venture of these amateurs was a performance of Marlowe's *Faustus.*

When the parts were being handed out it was suggested that Rupert should play "Helen." The suggestion was not acted on, though the reason for it plainly lay in the almost feminine pulchritude of the young poet's finely chiseled face. He was quite willing to essay the role but was eventually assigned to the gloomier part of "Mephistophilis." 1234436

There was nothing gloomy in the *Faustus* rehearsals. Often, when they were over, the company would repair to Rupert's sitting room for readings of poetry that went far into the night. That sitting room was small and low, with a lamp swung from the ceiling, and a narrow door through which watery scents and sounds crept up from the near-by river. It was oddly suggestive of a ship's cabin.

The eventual performance of *Faustus,* it must be admitted, was vaguely suggestive of a parish masque in pre-Elizabethan days. It was done in the A.D.C. Theatre, without scenery and without music, between gloomy green draperies and in a stage lighting that was found to be equally gloomy.

"It was indeed a queer performance," wrote Professor Edward Dent. " 'Faustus' looked absurdly young. 'Mephistophilis' (played by Rupert), his face completely hidden by his cowl, generally turned his back to the audience and spoke in a thick, indistinct voice. . . . But in spite of these things and many others, in spite of the tedious humour of the comic scenes, the play had a new spirit of its own. The tragic moments were genuinely moving. Crude, awkward, and amateurish as it all was, there was the spirit of true poetry about it. One felt that to these actors poetry was the greatest thing in life."*

Rupert was not unconscious of his deficiencies as an actor. When there was some talk of repeating the *Faustus* production Rupert asked Reginald Pole (more trained in stagecraft) to supplant him in the role of "Mephistophilis," contending that his friend Reginald would be able to do all the things he himself had tried to do and failed.

"As he wasn't really an actor," Pole explained, "and I was little else, I might possibly have managed the dramatic scenes more theatrically. But I could never have spoken the poetry any better than he did."

Rupert worried about his failure as a finished actor. He even went to Professor Dent and asked if voice culture would not be a help and confessed that he had a leaning toward singing lessons. He was ready to admit that he would never be able to sing. But such lessons, he felt, might train his sadly uneducated ear and give him better control of his voice. The prospective teacher, he further pointed out, would have to be an inexpensive one, as he himself had very little money.

Those singing lessons were indefinitely postponed. But his eagerness to excel prompted him, in his third year at King's, to be one of several members of the Carbonari who competed for the University Winchester Reading Prize. This test of elocution took place in the Senate House.

* By permission of Dr. Edward Dent.

"We had to read a divergent variety of standard English prose and poetry," writes Reginald Pole. "We, quite unprepared, had to give them political speeches, a long involved passage from the Church of England Prayer Book, and something from the Bible and from Shakespeare, besides some lyrical poetry. Rupert, Hugh Dalton, myself (and one other, I think) were the Carbonari competitors. There were about eighty contestants and during a long morning and afternoon we were gradually weeded out. The one thing that stands out clearest in my memory was Rupert's reading of Keats's 'Ode To A Nightingale.' Hugh Dalton read the prose passages, with a political speech of Burke's among them, and read them magnificently. I had an advantage with the Shakespeare (so much of which I had known by heart from my boyhood days). But Rupert outmatched us all in his rendition of the exquisite languor of Keats's measured phrases. He had all the quiet brooding lyricism, because he understood so well the inner world from which it came. Dalton and I finished first, and Rupert about seventh or eighth, as he probably slipped a little with the more prosaic political and ecclesiastical argumentation. But I shall never forget that sensitive reading of the Nightingale Ode. He always read his own poetry with the same unspectacular but deeply moving restraint."

The earlier *Faustus* performance, plainly enough, had failed to impress the college authorities. But it was not long before a change of heart took place in the seats of the mighty. The Milton Tercentenary occurred the following year. Past sins were forgiven and the once disappointing amateurs were considered as possibilities in the program. Since Milton had been a student at Christ's College the officials deemed it appropriate that the Tercentenary celebrations should include a performance of *Comus*. To Justin and Rupert Brooke the Master of Christ's suggested that the Marlowe Society might appropriately function in such an effort.

The suggestion was acted upon with both alactrity and enthusiasm. The temperamental Albert Rothenstein (who later be-

came a well-known London painter) was commissioned to prepare the scenery; day after day Rupert resorted to the Room Theta at the University Library to study books on stage construction and emulate Gordon Craig in obtaining aesthetic effects through simplified backgrounds. Frances Darwin (who was a granddaughter of Charles Darwin and later became Frances Cornford) was an active member of the group, as was her cousin Gwen Darwin (who later became the wife of Rupert's good friend Jacques Raverat). They struggled with costumes and splashed paint on flats and studied parts and argued over readings and even pored over a copy of the Trinity Milton facsimile for the settling of disputed points as to textual criticism.

It was a happy and hard-working group, with girls from Newnham for the first time taking part, and Rupert, with his flair for making friends with women, was glad to be one of the backstage toilers. If they faced the usual trials and tribulations of amateur producers they did it with a light heart and a conviction they were advancing the cultural life of Cambridge.

"It is difficult to criticize *Comus,*" reported Professor Dent, "or to write the history of its preparation. It had much the same faults and the same merits as *Faustus,* though on a larger scale. Rupert was not a good actor, nor even a good speaker of verse. Yet I feel now that anyone who remembers *Comus,* and remembers it with ever so slight a sense of beauty, will think of Rupert as the central figure in it. Watching rehearsals daily, as I did, I felt that, however much his personal beauty might count for, it was his passionate devotion to the spirit of poetry that really gave *Comus* its peculiar and indescribable atmosphere."*

This sagacious critic, while ready to admit the *Comus* production may have meant little to the world at large, did claim it meant a great deal for Rupert and his associates. "It was the first time he [Rupert] had had to bear the responsibility of a large undertaking and he addressed himself to it in the spirit of a scholar.

* By permission of Dr. Edward Dent.

It deepened his sense of poetry, of drama, and of music. It made him develop an ideal continually present in his mind, even in later years, which gave solidity to his group, the ideal of Cambridge, of young Cambridge, as the source from which the most vital movements in literature, art, and drama, were to spring."

How much Rupert had given to the *Comus* enterprise was brought catastrophically home to him once the production got well under way. He collapsed the day after the performance and had to be carried off by his mother and put to bed, without even a chance to say good-by to Justin, Frances, Gwen and Albert and his other backstage associates or to help clear up the mess after the performance. From his enforced exile he sent word to his friends that he felt like a deserter but hopefully announced he would soon be a convalescent and able to sit up and take a little warm milk and Tennyson.

Tennyson, by the way, always touched Rupert with impatience. The derisive note on the older Cambridge poet is frequent in his letters. "The only things to read this benighted place (Rapallo in southern Italy) supplies are Tennyson's poems and a London Directory of 1883," he wrote to St. John Lucas. "I've tried both and prefer the latter. I did struggle through three-fourths of one of the more Victorian of the Idylls, but a severe attack of seasickness and an overwhelming drowsiness compelled me to leave off. I felt as if I had consumed three basins of bread and milk with too much sugar in it." When suggesting that Frances Cornford have tea with him somewhere he solemnly proposed, as Victorian to Victorian, that they sip their tea in a room with antimacassars and talk of Mr. Tennyson's poetry.

It is not altogether a wild guess, however, that if Rupert had outlived his turbulent youth—and his too-demanding youthfulness—the course of his development would have been more and more along Tennysonian lines. They had more in common than the younger Cambridge man would have been ready to admit.

Rupert's interest in the theatre was accentuated by his more and

more frequent visits to London. There he saw Stephen Phillips' *Nero* (whom he willfully claimed to be one of his heroes) and was thrilled watching Sarah Bernhardt as "Phèdre." He was impressed by *Don Juan in Hell* and succumbed to the charm of the Russian Ballet at Covent Garden. He boasted, in fact, that he had seen the Russian Ballet fifteen times in one year and protested it was the Russians alone who could save civilization. He also, for the second time, sat through a performance of *The Importance of Being Earnest,* a play in which he had once been an amateur actor and of which he retained a definite sentimental memory.

"Several are no duller to talk to than males," he wrote to Erica Cotterill of the girls taking part in the Cambridge production of *Comus.* "There is ONE, oh, there is ONE, aged twenty, *very* beautiful and nice and everything. My pen is dragging at its bit to run away with me about her. I adore her—for a week. Every evening we rehearse *The Importance of Being Earnest* . . . and I have to make love to her all the time!"

But in one of those hurried London visits, where he came up like a whale to breathe, he forgot the wearied flippancies of Oscar Wilde after witnessing a performance of *Peter Pan.*

He accepted the Barrie play as the incarnation of all one's childish dreams, which he avowed to be the best dreams one ever has and stood a proving ground for grownups to find out if they could be happy children again. Filled with his memory of pirates and fairies and Indians, he scribbled off a letter to St. John Lucas, a letter in which he marveled at the fact that one had to go to London, of all places, to find Pan. For after witnessing the Barrie play, he confessed, he had been going about like a person in a dream, quoting all the glorious fragments he could remember until, as he wandered about Cambridge, Trinity Street seemed to change to the shore of Mermaid's Lagoon and King's Chapel was suddenly transformed into the House of the Treetops.

Rupert himself, never a fetishist of consistency, had already been mildly infected by the coruscating audacities of Bernard Shaw.

In fact, when that energetic Fabian made a second speech at Cambridge, the tawny-headed poet had the privilege of sitting next to the bearded sage at dinner, a short and early meal because of the platform engagement. Rupert reported that he neither spoke nor ate, during that dinner, but sat watching Shaw's face. He could admire the Shavian profile and the Shavian voice, but of the later address on the formation of a middle-class party in Parliament he protested that he liked only the funny bits.

With Shaw as a dramatist, however, it was a different story. The young Cambridge poet had been captured by *Arms and the Man,* had read the Blackwood article entitled "Grandeur et Decadence de Bernard Shaw," and had even confided to a King's College friend that he was embarking on a great play written in imitation of Shaw's latest.

It was *Candida* that made the deepest impression on the would-be dramatist. After seeing it for the second time he again called it the greatest play in the world.

The reasons for this unorthodox decision are not hard to discern. Rupert not only saw a resemblance between himself and Eugene Marchbanks, the eighteen-year-old poet who was too unworldly to conform to his Philistine surroundings, but he also discerned in the character a resemblance to the bearded dramatist who remained so intent on building a protective wall of insolence about his secret tendernesses. Both were opposed to pure beauty for beauty's sake. Both were rebels against the established order. If Shaw put a good deal of Shelley in his portrait of "Marchbanks" he also, without knowing it, put in a good deal of Rupert Brooke. The author of *Candida* was not altogether in sympathy with the artist who lost out in the contest with actuality. Yet "Marchbanks," with his youthful shyness and otherworldness, his inner courage behind a shrinking manner, his childlike short cuts to ultimate truths, his ecstasy mixed up with unhappiness, had many characteristics that marked Rupert in his earlier days. Both had their share of fiercely petulant willfulness, both on occasion could show great nervous force, and both could even be casually anarchic

in their dress, just as both declined to behave as a too-exacting family expected, and just as both, with all their dread of loneliness, had the courage when challenged to stand alone.

It is no wonder Rupert expressed the hope that he might some day play "Marchbanks." This, on the stage, he never did. But in real life it was a role into which he not infrequently lapsed.

CHAPTER 6

Excursions and Alarms

THOUGH Rupert, like Pater's "Marius," was more given to contemplation than to action he was always a wanderer. In his youth he saw much of England, his family following the time-honored island custom of going summer by summer to some sufficiently interesting seaside resort. As a student he adventured forth on walking tours and camping trips, caravaning through the New Forest, holidaying in Wales at the Fabian Summer School, or canoeing through his homeland's inland waters. While at King's he uncovered the root of that innate restlessness which turned him into a not always happy peripatetic. He proclaimed that Cambridge might be loathsome, that Rugby might be dull, that London might be tiresome, but what he was trying to escape was not Cambridge nor Rugby nor London but *Rupert Brooke* himself. Much as he loved his own country, he could announce in a letter to Reginald Pole (January 11, 1911) that he was just off to Germany, for the rest of his life. That was before the First World War threw him and his countrymen into an abyss of hatred and clouded his admiration for German friends and tempered his love for the restful beauty of Munich, as revealed in his essay on "An Unusual Young Man."

He was always seeking an Arcady that refused to stay Arcadian. His mother, inured to his restlessness, remained guardedly indulgent in the matter of these migratory impulses that seemed as organic with him as with the birds of the air. She was willing to help finance his frugally organized excursions, joining in his relief when he found he was able to book passage to Bremen and back for a guinea. When, later on, she came into possession of a motor-

car she was ready enough to surrender it on occasions to Rupert, though she worried about the wildness with which he drove.

The time came when his spasmodic holiday jaunts were extended into prolonged odysseys that took him halfway round the world. He was never a good sailor, as might be deduced from "A Channel Passage." But he eventually established himself as a member of that race whose men always look best at the prow of a ship.

While still at Rugby he had visited Germany and the Low Countries, where he liked the beer much better than the natives. While an undergraduate at King's he undertook a second journey to Italy that soon left him homesick for his own misty island. And during his Cambridge vacations he essayed divers excursions to the Continent. One of the happiest of these was a visit to Switzerland during the Christmas holidays of 1908.

Almost as happy, plainly, was his escape to the New Forest one April when an English spring and outdoor life touched him into ecstasy.

"Oh, the joy of it," he wrote to his friend Jacques Raverat, known as the Frog because of his French ancestry. "For four days I was for the first time in my life a free man and my own master. ... For I went dancing and leaping through the New Forest, with three pounds and a satchel full of books, talking to everyone I met, mocking and laughing at them, sleeping and eating anywhere, singing to the birds, tumbling about in the flowers, bathing in the rivers, and in general behaving naturally. And all in England at Eastertide! And so I walked and laughed and met a many people and made a thousand songs—all very good—and in the end of the days came to a woman who was more glorious than the sun and stronger and stranger than the sea, and kinder than the earth; who is a flower made out of fire, a star that laughs all day, whose brain is clean and clear like a man's, and her heart is full of courage and kindness; and whom I love. I told her that the Earth was crowned with windflowers and dancing down the violet ways of the Spring, that Christ had died and Pan was risen, and that her mouth was like the sunlight on a gull's wings."

An earlier autumn visit to the New Forest had not left the mercurial young poet so rhapsodic. We find him writing from Brockenhurst to "Dour St. John" Lucas: "I have been dreaming here in the New Forest, often by myself, sometimes among an admirable family, conducted by some school friends. I alternately write verse for them and play lawn tennis. But I am a little desolate. . . . This New Forest is sad with the prescience of autumn. And at sunset and dawn the little hollow places are full of sudden white mists and the earth is covered with dead brown leaves. And the pines shake with many tears. The stillness and silence frighten me. For there are memories and visions, and one hears other voices whispering in the heart. I should like to be in London, in the crowds and noise where one can be silent and alone."

Rupert's moods, it must be remembered, were largely conditioned by the weather. "The garden is immeasurably autumnal, sad, mysterious, august," he could write from the Old Vicarage to Frances Cornford. "I walk in it, feeling like a fly crawling on the score of the Fifth Symphony."

But Alpine air could give a lift to his spirits. He approached his holiday in Switzerland, it is true, without great enthusiasm. To his cousin Erica he wrote that the Switzerland party of the Leons was twenty-eight in number, with such young, heady, strange females that he doubted if he would have the courage to join it. On the eve of the excursion he wrote to his mother, who had pointed out to him the need for a rest: "I always feel that I oughtn't to, and can't, *do nothing*. There are so many things I must learn to do, and there is not much time. My brain must be working. And so the only way, I find, I have a real holiday from my work is on a walking tour, or in Switzerland, times and places where it is impossible to think. Or read for more than five minutes. In a way such things are a waste of time. And I can't imagine anything I should hate more than a long holiday like that, of more than a week or ten days. It would be intolerable."

Yet from Danioth's Grand Hotel at Andermatt he could write on Boxing Day: "You would scarcely recognize me if you saw me

leading the extraordinary healthy life which plagues me at present. I spend nearly all the day skiing and tobogganing. I am fat and red and my nose has no skin. I am completely happy. . . . It is very strange spending Christmas Day in this manner. My outdoor life has taken from me all ability to write coherently. The party I am with is rather nice. . . . Even the Newnhamites and others of their sex and age are less terrible than they might be."

The party proved a jollier one than the fastidious poet was prepared for. We find him confessing that he had been leading a morbidly healthy life on snow and ice and eating as he never ate before.

This was a much-needed relapse to naturalism. Sallying forth, of a morning, warm-booted and muffled in wool, they slithered down snowy slopes and tested their skill at *gelandesprungs* and *telemarks*. They did their tumbling slaloms and Christiania turns and even ventured the final thrill of a few *Birger-Raud* ramp jumps. It was all very carefree and jolly and remote from the gray skies of Cambridge and the winter fogs of London.

After their speedings and spills and their day in mountain air they would foregather in the lounge, easing away their excess of animal spirits with song and story, sometimes with dancing. Sometimes, too, they indulged in dramatics, light and frivolous productions on an impromptu stage where the participants were as high-spirited as a group of children getting ready for a Halloween prank.

In these productions Rupert took more than a minor part. In some he was both actor and author, obviously not reluctant to sharpen his tools at the workbench of amateur effort. In the 1908 party he was responsible for a burlesque called *From the Jaws of the Octopus,* a lighthearted melodrama that was staged the day after Christmas at the Hotel Silvretta, Klosters. Rupert cast himself as "Eugene de Montmorency" and for his second-act curtain speech provided himself with the following ennobling statement, to be delivered with appropriate gestures: "Whoever raises his hand against woman, to tread her underfoot or trample

on her, save in the way of kindness, is unworthy of the name of Englishman!"

The tenor of the opus may be appraised from the fact that the cast included a "Bishop of Seltzer" and his wife "Mrs. Water," just as the lavishness of the production may be estimated by the program announcement: "Scenery designed by the entire cast; dresses lent by the entire cast; music composed by the entire cast; dances arranged ditto; wigs by the entire cast, and armour and explosives by the entire cast." The extras, it might be added, included Bobsleighers, Skaters, Tobogganers, Invalids and Private Detectives.

From the Jaws of the Octopus may not have been Shakespearean in character but it brought Rupert into closer contact with Helen Verrall, the daughter of Dr. Verrall, a Cambridge professor, and marked the beginning of a long friendship. Miss Verrall, in the play, had filled the role of "The Honorable Polly Technic" and had been so ready with suggestions as to text changes and set building that Rupert, when he spent yet another Christmas-season vacation in Switzerland, was glad to have her help in staging his comic opera *The Super-Ski,* which was duly given at the Hotel Schweizerhof, in Lenzerheide, on January 1, 1910.

Rupert took the writing of *The Super-Ski* more seriously than might be inferred from the Gilbertian lightness of the verses. He could be seen, night after night, perched on a window sill, busy with a stub pencil and scraps of paper. Since no original score was devised for his libretto he had the difficult task of fitting his verses to music already in existence, all the way from the "Soldiers' March" in *Faust* to "If I Should Sow a Tiny Seed of Love." Most of the actors (one of whom was Rupert's old Cambridge friend, Dudley Ward) wore ski costumes. Since Rupert had little or no singing voice a more musicianly stand-in named Vernon was compelled to sing the poet-author's part for him, while Rupert merely pantomimed the required action.

It was such an odd production, both in concept and in execution, that the scattering of German and Swiss hotel guests who

wandered in to witness the performance sat puzzled for a time and finally withdrew, convinced that either they or the rowdy crowd on the stage were crazy.

It was all pretty frivolous and foolish but not without significance in showing how the mercurial Rupert could at times make himself the center of boisterous groups, and, when the occasion demanded, pour out either a flood of doggerel or a lighthearted lyric to celebrate some passing event. Dozens and dozens of his letters have interpolated effusions in rhyme, playful verses commemorating some happy experience or satirizing some obnoxious acquaintance. Not a few are pensive and nostalgic; many are witty and ribald. But all are indicative of an alert mind relieving itself in lyrical overflow. Even a visit to a Buckinghamshire inn known as The Pink and Lily had to be memorialized in rhymed couplets:

> Never came there to the Pink
> Two such men as we, I think.
> Never came there to the Lily
> Two men quite so richly silly,
> So broad, so supple, and so tall,
> So modest and so brave withal,
> With hearts so clear, such noble eyes
> Filled with such sage philosophies;
> Thirsty for Good, secure of Truth,
> Fired by a purer flame than youth,
> Serene as age, but not so dirty,
> Old, young, mature, being under thirty.
> Were ever two so fierce and strong,
> Who drank so deep and laughed so long,
> So proudly meek, so humbly proud,
> Who walked so far, and sang so loud?*

But it was not all song and laughter. And all Rupert's holiday jaunts about the English shires and all his holiday excursions across

* From Rupert Brooke's unpublished poems, by permission of Sir Edward Marsh.

the Channel were not so happy as his Christmas-season sojourn at Lenzerheide. A shadow was soon to fall across the careless paths of pleasure seeking.

His growing love for outdoor life, it is true, had strengthened his body and taken from him a little of that shadowy introspection which the Romans once called *umbratilis*. Mountain climbing he abjured, but back in England he grew fonder of walking and swimming, realizing, plainly, that nervous energy like his demanded a strong physique. From Beckey Falls in Devonshire, in the spring of 1909 (March 25) he wrote to his cousin Erica at Godalming: "My view from the window before me includes a lawn, flower-beds with many flowers, a waterfall, rocks and trees, forests, mountains, and the sky. It covers some twenty miles of country, and no houses. It is—indeed!—raining, and has been for the two days I have been living here. Yet it is very pleasant. I am leading the healthy life. I rise early, twist myself about on a kind of pulley that is supposed to make my chest immense—but doesn't!—eat no meat, wear very little, do not part my hair, take frequent cold baths, work ten hours a day and rush madly about the mountains in flannels and rainstorms for hours. I am surprisingly cheerful about it. It is all part of my scheme for returning to Nature."

At the end of the Michaelmas Term, that same year, Rupert repeated his holiday trip to Switzerland. He discovered, in those happier days, that one could cross the Channel for twenty shillings. This vacation in the Swiss mountains was less joyous than the earlier visits to the Alps. He was in the midst of friends there, some of his fellow travelers being Dudley Ward and Jacques Raverat, Godwin Baynes, and Daphne and Margery Olivier, the two sun-tanned daughters of the ex-Governor of Jamaica. These girls he had got to know, two years before, at the Fabian Summer School. But Rupert was in what he called one of his "cubbish moods" and was mostly wishing to be elsewhere. Then, on his way home, he ate some tainted food and suffered from ptomaine



The playing field at Rugby



Rugby Chapel.





Two views

poisoning. While still weak and ill from this affliction he experienced one of his recurring attacks of influenza.

He declined hospitalization and insisted on pursuing his travels. Wretched in mind and body, he spent a week on the homeward journey, breaking the trip at Basle, where he tried to look at pictures, and at Paris, where he went through the paces of doing the Louvre with a group of fellow Fabians and a few artist compatriots. He was still an ambulant patient, with a high fever, when he arrived in London.

Once back in Rugby he was promptly put to bed by an adequately alarmed mother. His condition, for days, was one of utter misery as he lay inert and subsisted on tapioca and gruel. It was one of the dismal periods of his life. But his misery of the body was no keener than that of his mind. For a greater blow was to confront him on his return to Rugby. He found that his father had suffered a cerebral hemorrhage, a stroke that resulted, as well, in a painful affliction of the eyes. The condition became so serious that the prospect of his continuing as Housemaster grew tenuous.

"It's horrible of me," Rupert wrote to Frances Cornford, "to talk like this when I'm in the house with two other people who are infinitely worse off in happiness than I am, and one of them in pain. . . . Your letter cheered me greatly at the exact time when I was sitting gloomily waiting for my father's return from the London doctor, and wondering what the verdict would be. I had sunk into that abysmal darkness which comes on a convalescent when anything goes wrong."

The verdict of the London specialist was not a reassuring one. On the very day, in fact, when his half-hundred boys came trooping back to School Field their Housemaster passed away. His death was sudden.

With Rupert it resulted in a collapse. Just after the funeral he went to bed again, reputedly with a return of his influenza, and for many days he subsisted, as he put it, on milk and pieces he could surreptitiously bite out of the end of his thermometer.

Grief, however deep, could not break a spirit so valorous. When he emerged from his illness—in which, he confessed, he wrote countless Hardyesque poems about people whose affairs always went dismally wrong—he announced his intention of substituting for his father in the management of School Field House.

This he did for ten busy weeks, bidding good-by to Cambridge and all his plans for the next term. That experience was not without its rewards. For one thing, at least temporarily, it kept his mother from being turned out of a home in which she had lived for fifteen long years. And, as one of his friend put it, it lessened the threat of the youthful poet's suffering from "aesthete's foot." For once, Rupert had to work for others. Little as he himself cared about money, it kept the family coffers from ebbing to an uncomfortably low ebb. There was a house of fifty boys to be managed, and "the sum of the matter is," he wrote to Frances Cornford, "that I've got to stay here this term and help my mother run things. I shall be able to do a lot of my own work, of course, and I shall come across to Cambridge at intervals for books. . . . There's financial difficulties ahead, and though that doesn't much bother me, it adds enormously to the worry of elderly people like my father and mother."

There were more than material rewards for Rupert's labors as a housemaster. His new duties were not without their compensations of the spirit. They made him more self-reliant. They introduced him to a sense of leadership. He soon found he was not a failure as a schoolmaster, in spite of his youth, explaining that he adopted a bluff Christian tone with his boys that was wholly pedagogic. Those boys remembered, too, how the new master had once played for the School at different games and, because of those extramural activities, remained duly respectful.

He was, however, still so averse to everything pedagogic that he could lament his divorce from old friends and complain that four weeks at Field School seemed like four centuries. He could confess that hard work and grief and two illnesses had hung a veil between him and happier days, and left him wondering if he

really had, a million years ago, wallowed on a white hillside where Daphne was like Diana and one called Margery seemed a brown woodland goddess.

That cloud of regret seems to have wept itself away. At the end of the term that had once seemed so drearily toilsome a sea change took place in his feeling and a characteristic nostalgic coloring crept into his mood. Time, as so often time does, flattered the receding scene by half erasing it, and made a lost world more beautiful by leaving it misty.

"School Field, that palatial building, will know me no more," he wrote to Edward Marsh. "Henceforth I shall have to play on other people's tennis lawns. I wept copiously last week on saying good-by to the three and fifty little boys whose Faith and Morals I had upheld for ten weeks. I found I had fallen in love with them all. They were so pleasant and freshminded. . . . And it filled me with purpureal gloom to know that their plastic little souls would harden into the required shapes and they would go to swell the indistinguishable masses who fill Trinity Hall, Clare, Caius . . . and at last become members of the English Upper or Upper Middle Classes. I am glad I am not going to be a school-master forever. The tragedy would be too great."

CHAPTER 7

Grantchester and Growth

RUPERT, so often unhappy in his environment and so torn between a hunger for solitude and a craving for companionship, knew a belated peace of mind when he came to live in the Old Vicarage at Grantchester where

> . . . In that garden, black and white,
> Creep whispers through the grass all night;
> And spectral dance, before the dawn,
> A hundred Vicars down the lawn. . . .*

To that lovely old hamlet which inspired the playfully poignant poem known to every Cambridge lover and still murmured in summer twilights on the upper river, Rupert and his mother did not move immediately after his father's death. They first took up residence at 24 Bilton Road in Rugby, in a small house with a patch of grass in front and uniformly unattractive homes on either side of it. Rupert, who had always lived in a house with a name, found he had finally descended to living at a number.

A new contentment came to him, however, when he made his home in the Old Vicarage. He was on not unfamiliar ground. A part of two summers he had already spent in a Grantchester house known as the Orchard. Of his first summer there he had written to his cousin Erica: "I'm in a small house, a sort of cottage, with a dear plump weather-beaten kindly old lady in control. I have a perfectly glorious time, seeing nobody I know day after day.

* From *The Collected Poems of Rupert Brooke.* Copyright, 1915, by Dodd, Mead & Company.

The room I have opens straight out onto a stone verandah covered with creepers and a little old-fashioned garden full of old-fashioned flowers and *crammed* with roses. I work at Shakespeare, read, and write all day, and now and then wander in the woods or by the river. I bathe every morning and sometimes by moonlight, have all my meals, chiefly fruit, brought to me out of doors, and am as happy as the day is long. Every now and then dull bald spectacled people from Cambridge come out and take tea here."

The lure of Grantchester, plainly, was already in his blood. That dreamy little village, in fact, was a place to make any nature lover happy. Amid orchards and gardens and wooded plots were a scattering of homely houses presided over by an ancient church. The hamlet itself sloped down to the upper waters of the Cam by Grantchester Mill, the mill that spanned the swift-running leat and had been the scene of one of Chaucer's tales. The stream and the water meadows were fringed with the tall and stately trees of Trumpington Hall, and of a summer day the air was shaken with the rumble of the mill and filled with the wholesome smell of flour. Wild flowers were thick along the sloping banks, and under the full stream that wandered off beneath towering chestnuts fish darted and flashed.

It was a haunted stream, a quiet backwater of life where Tennyson in his Cambridge days had dreamed and the author of "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage" had swum in the pool above the dam and Dan Chaucer himself had watched the shadows lengthening across the sleepy water.

The Old Vicarage itself was a quaintly antique house of red brick partly covered with ivy. It was a proper retreat for a poet, a place of silence and shadows where behind the old wooden palings fauns might be imagined peering through the lilacs under the darkly grouped trees, and naiads might be seen following a ghostly Pan through the twilight shadows. There the once formal borders had run wild and the roses had long since outgrown the grafts and relapsed into tangled arches and festoons of primitive briar. Every gable of the house and every corner of the garden

was redolent of the past. Even the disorder of that garden, with its cluttered walks and its antique sun dial above a pond basin long waterless, appealed to a spirit who preferred wildness to strangling formality. When a visitor complained about the affronting yellow glass in the door that opened on the neglected lawn Rupert stoutly asserted his liking for that yellow glass, claiming it gave him a fine illusion of sunlight on a rainy day.

Sun-loving though he was, he could wring a wayward joy out of the gloom and decay that went hand in hand with a storied past. The Old Vicarage, he wrote to Erica Cotterill, was a deserted, lonely, dank, ruined, overgrown, gloomy, lovely house with a garden that pretty well matched it, and fusty as it was with the ghosts of generations of moldering clergymen, it made a fit place in which to write his kind of poetry. He could even pretend to his cousin that the clerical ghosts were giving him the habits of a vicar.

He loved the Old Vicarage more than he was ready to admit. In the month of May—of 1910—he wrote to Edward Marsh in a more lyrical frame of mind, saying that Grantchester was lovely and the apple blossoms and the river and the sunsets made him relapse into a more than Wordsworthian communion with Nature and prevented him from reading more than a hundred lines a day or thinking at all.

How deep was his attachment for that Grantchester home—which never actually lulled him into the mental inertia he pretended—may be gathered from a hurried letter he wrote four years later to Frances Cornford. He was then in uniform, with the Anson Battalion, and about to take his unhappy part in the First World War.

"Awful rumors prevail here that The Old Vicarage is to be destroyed. I wonder if you could find out if that's so, and by whose orders. And what steps could be taken in the way of saving it. I mean, could one buy it? Or the land? It seems to me very important. Failing that, I want some decent painter to make a

picture of it. . . . And if there are any good photographers about, you might turn them in."

That his anxiety was deep-seated may be gathered from a second letter he wrote. "I want several things," he explained to Gwen Raverat, who was a professional artist. "A line to say how and where Jacques is and what you're doing. I wrote to him, but I guess he is in France. Also, they say The Old Vicarage is to be pulled down. Could you paint a little picture of it, quietly and sadly, as befits the end of an epoch? When all's over—or even before—I'll pay you for it, as much as is right in the sight of the Lord."*

Rupert, throughout his second year behind the door with the yellow glass that turned gloom into sunlight for him, was deep in his work as a creative artist. In spite of his reiterated confessions of idleness he was determined to accomplish something worth while in poetry. As an artisan he was well past apprenticeship. He knew his tools by this time. Some of his happiest lyrics came to life during that Grantchester sojourn.

Poetry, as always, still came first with him, ready as he was to hide all deeper feeling behind a mask of indifference. The real seriousness with which he courted the Muse may be inferred from the assiduous way in which he submitted his efforts to those friends whose judgment he valued. Poems were appended to letters to the versifying Frances Cornford; they were slipped into correspondence with St. John Lucas; they were sent on postcards to Jacques Raverat; they were included in the mail to his cousin Erica, and were dispatched to Wilfrid Gibson for some responsive word from a dependable fellow artist. Closer at hand, all the while, was Professor Edward Dent, whose interest in the gifted

* Rupert's fears that the Old Vicarage was to be demolished were unfounded. They had first come to him through Denis Browne, to whom he wrote while with the Anson Battalion: "It shall yet be left for that slow Prussian, Time, to reduce it. Perhaps I may buy it with my prize money after the war." The ancient house, still standing, is now occupied by Rupert's old friend, Dudley Ward, to whom it was given by the poet's mother.

undergraduate was more than scholastic. His criticisms were sometimes severe, but always considered and fair.

Of all those friendly helpers up the steep slope, Rupert valued most the opinion of Edward Marsh, who was as outspoken in his praise as he was frank in his disapproval. Marsh, whom D. H. Lawrence had dubbed "the policeman of poetry" after he had criticized Lawrence's formal deficiencies, was more than Rupert's friend and sponsor. He remained the mallet behind the chisel. He, more than any other, sought to shape the career of the young poet he believed in. He foresaw what might develop, in time, out of such animation, such mobility of mind, such capacity for sensation, such fondness for fond things, such Cyrenaic eagerness to touch and taste and see, and drink the fullness of life. He was neither a puritan nor a pulpiteer, and his aim was not to emasculate Rupert's excursions into realism as Becker once tried to purify Byron's early poems. He appreciated the courage it took to defy tradition and face the charge of perversity by introducing arresting ugliness in the midst of beauty. But some of the young poet's lines, he claimed, were overfrank and overphysical.

His chastening advice was not always accepted, great as was Rupert's hunger for guidance and advice. The author of "Lust" had his human craving for approval. He also had a wish to escape preciousness in his product and bring poetry a little closer to life. So he stood ready, as a rule, to fend for his brain children and argue that his way of writing was the only way for one of his nature. But he was less intransigent than he pretended, plaintively pleading, after one of his duels or his misdeeds, to be treated not as he deserved but as he desired. He had his own battles to fight, his advances and recessions. But whatever his disappointments and frustrations, he could always creep back into the cathedrallike calm of an art that meant more than a religion to him. His life, long or short, was to be given up to poetry. And even in the seclusion of Grantchester and the midnights when he was deep in the molding of his golden lines he saw to it that an interplay of letters kept him in touch with things literary. The

antennae of attention remained receptive to the air waves of outside judgment.

He found an inner peace during that interim of versewriting. But, as usual, it was not an enduring one. It would be wrong to say he was continuously contented with the Old Vicarage. The faun-haunted garden, which could be so odorous with roses and wallflowers in summer, could be gloomy enough in the bleakness of December to make its tenant term the place the "House of Usher." Arcady, with that vivid yet restless spirit, could never long remain Arcady. He was too like a fevered patient always looking for a cooler spot on the sheets of circumstance. His was merely an armistice with unrest. Yet even in the winter of his discontent he at last knew a feeling of well-being. He had his surges of satisfaction with life and his song maker's periods of exaltation. But village life, centering about a church and a manor house and a pub with its half-pints and darts, was not the final word in the fullness of existence. It may have been placid and sleepily respectable, but it was not perpetually satisfying. It was foreordained that Rupert's innate restlessness would eventually take him to other places, where, in due process of time, his longing for his lost haven under the chestnuts and apple trees would bring him back to see their branches stir in the moonlight above Byron's Pool.

In that secluded bower, by swimming, by tramping the meadows and lanes, by eating and sleeping outdoors whenever possible and going barefoot whenever he could, by achieving peace of mind and following a sanely bucolic life, he hardened his body and tempered his nerves. His sympathy with the decadents grew slimmer. Beardsley's mirthless humor in caricaturing his fellow men had already lost a little of its force. He found himself shifting to the solidities of Rodin and Augustus John. For any scrap or sketch of John's, he confessed, he stood willing to sell his boots. He emerged from the adolescent flippancy which had made him mock at the Old Masters—the Old Masters who, as some Philistine cynic has claimed, can be as dull as old mistresses. He drifted away from

his earlier acsthete's interest in etching-lined rooms with mauve draperies and sea-green cushions. He began to see less virtue in *virtu* and no longer talked of sipping liqueurs that tasted like half-ripe hyacinths and looked like the seas that murmur around Lesbos.

Instead, in shorts and well-worn cricket shirt, he tugged his boat up the sunny shallows of the Cam and just below Byron's Pool stripped and swam and sunned his denuded young body on the bank. He came to know each bar and bend of the Cam, each small or stately tree group. He knew them so well that in the darkness of midnight he could paddle from Cambridge and tell when he was near home by the particular leaf murmur of one particular poplar tree that stood close to his unperceived landing place.

He claimed that he had found peace in that new Arcady even while he lamented that, since it held no flocks he might pipe to, he could only sing to the backyard hens that clustered about him.

That allusion to the hens is not to be lightly overlooked. It stands another example of his defense mechanism. If through all his inner and impetuous earnestness often swept a willful yet relieving breeze of jocosity such occasional levities must be accepted as his "umbrella against the world." Those lapses into the jocose were the cellophane with which he sought to protect the vulnerable wares of the heart. For behind the shield of flippancy, by this time, was a fixed determination to do things, to reverse his earlier dictum that living poetry was much better than writing poetry. And watching over him were friends like Eddie Marsh to prod him on.

"I worked until one," he explained to Katharine Cox, "And then ran nearly to Haslingfield and back before lunch, thinking over the odd bits. There was such clearness and frosty sun." [As usual, of course, he was almost barometrical in his response to weather conditions.] "Some men under a haystack, eating their lunch, shouted how fine a day it was. I shouted back it was very cold, and ran on. They roared with laughter and shouted after me that with that fine crop of hair I oughtn't to be cold."

That fine crop of hair, indeed, made him a marked man in any company. It crowned the chiseled features and the health-flushed face with a sun glow that prompted people to turn and stare after him, wondering from what Olympus a young Greek god had strayed. He was not unconscious of its appeal. But the irreverent slum children in the neighborhood of Harold Monro's oddly placed Poetry Bookshop were not above accosting the long-haired poet as "Buffalo Bill."

Rupert remained quite indifferent to ridicule, and was ready enough to make fun of himself on occasions. It was the old device of sheathing the fine blade of feeling in a scabbard of flippancy. The one thing he was not indifferent to was failure. The fact that he got only a Second when he took the Classical Tripos at Cambridge in the summer of 1909 may have been due partly to his immersion in Elizabethan literature and partly to his preoccupation with England's later poets. It was, however, a disappointment to him, a setback that spurred him into less desultory effort. For months he read and made notes late into the night, working for the Charles Oldham Shakespeare Prize.

This he won, as a very acceptable Christmas present, before starting out on his holiday in Switzerland.

His continuing research work on Elizabethan drama became as strenuous as his earlier struggle to master meter and rhyme. He acknowledged that he had been reading twenty pre-Elizabethan plays a week and had found them all pretty poor. Even when supposed to be resting at Lulworth he "soused" himself all morning, not in the sea, but in the dramatic outpourings of the Elizabethans and in the afternoon climbed cliffs and sat alone on a rock, doing his best to organize what he had gleaned from many musty books. Overwork, at times, took some of the edge off his enthusiasm. From a trough of weariness he could proclaim that there were no worth-while plays written between 1500 and 1650, except *The Faithfull Shepheardesse* and perhaps *Antony and Cleopatra.*

The result of his labor, after many a long hour at both the University Library and the British Museum, was a sufficiently scholarly

monograph on "Puritanism as Represented in the Early English Drama Up to 1642."

With this essay he won the Harkness Prize for that year. A copy of the essay now reposes in the British Museum.

From those long months of research he won more than a college prize. The dyer's hand, subdued by what it worked in, took on a deeper coloring. The impressionable young undergraduate's immersion in the lusty violence of the Elizabethans intensified his distaste for the traditional prettiness of much modern verse. He began to prefer strength to sweetness. Any fool, he contended, could write a technically perfect sonnet. He could accuse even Tennyson of being boringly "sing-song." Yet if from Webster and his associates he absorbed a tendency toward an occasional earthiness and an occasional coarseness (which he felt might accentuate the pure beauty of the passage preceding it) there lurks the suspicion he may have been anxious to avoid the charge of being a beautiful poet involved in beautiful themes. He had no intention of being accepted as the author of lyrics that lifted up their lips to be kissed.

There were still magic casements in his house of life. But the England all about him became less of a fairyland. The earlier almost feminine sensitivity was shuttered behind a fabricated robustness, an ersatz sort of brusqueness that was to show he was not remote from the common man. He could repeat with Whitmanlike ardency that his occupation was being in love with the universe.

In a revelatory letter to a fellow Fabian, Ben Keeling, he attempted to explain why this new turn toward earthiness no longer shrouded him in pessimism. "What happens is," he wrote, "that I suddenly feel the extraordinary value and importance of everybody I meet and almost everything I see. In things I am moved in this way, especially by some things; but in people by almost all people. . . . I roam about places . . . and sit in trains and see the essential glory and beauty of all the people I meet. I can watch a dirty middle-aged tradesman in a railway carriage for

hours, and love every dirty greasy sulky wrinkle in his weak chin and every button on his spotted unclean waistcoat. I know their states of mind are bad. But I'm so much occupied with their being there at all that I don't have time to think of that. . . . It's the same about the things of ordinary life. . . . Half an hour's roaming about a street or village or railway station shows so much beauty that it's impossible to be anything but wild with suppressed exhilaration. And it's not only beauty and beautiful things. In a flicker of sunlight on a blank wall, or a reach of muddy pavement, or smoke from an engine at night, there's a sudden significance and importance and inspiration that makes the breath stop with a gulp of certainty and happiness."

This "life drunkenness," as William Watson called it, began to assert itself in the varying poems on which Rupert was now burning his midnight oil. His awareness to the intoxicating beauty of life must be accepted as more than mere physical reaction to momentary stimuli. The one unforgivable sin, in his litany, was insensitiveness. He was ready enough to accept the senses as the eager messengers of heightened perception, but he remained too much of a pessimist to find existence a daily rapture and every passing moment majestic. There were, he began to find, uglinesses to hurt and injustices to anger him. Nor did he escape the soul solitariness of the brooding pagan who had no Rock of Ages on which to lean. Through all his short life he struggled against that solitariness, reaching out for friends who were inaccessible and drugging himself with elations that were transient. He remained a perplexed unbeliever who did what he could to forget the impermanence of life in a sharpened responsiveness to what beauty he could find in the ephemeral, armoring himself in shining exultations at the thought of finding himself alive on a planet still strange and exciting and unpredictable.

Life, however, is not always magnificent. Great as was Rupert's capacity for sensuous enjoyment, the sparks thrown off by daily ecstasies do not light the way to peace of mind. He remained more visual than visionary. In his earlier years, it is true, he even ap-

proached the languid fastidiousness of the *précieuse.* But he nested the overkeen blade of feeling in a sheathing of deliberated animalism, set in his passion to escape prettiness, fixed in his resolve to escape the charge of being a charter member of the Charm School. His entire career, in fact, was a cold war against gentility. If he blithely mocked at the eternal verities he could not escape the sad fate of the unbeliever who not only has little faith but has little faith in faith itself. His only religion was his art; when it failed as a religion it at least stood a sanctuary. He was not unconscious of the mystery and terror of life, alive as he was to its momentary grandeurs. While still an adolescent he was prompted to confess that he was one of those who look into their own souls and try to evade the final answers by an escape into that nebulous realm known as Art.

The only immortality he asked for was to live on in his poetry. He was, during those Grantchester days, already inured to print. His verse had appeared in the *Cambridge Review* and the *Nation,* occasionally in the *English Review* and quite frequently in the *Westminster Gazette.* But he was not satisfied with the sporadic appearance of his poems. He felt the time was ripe for their appearance in book form. When his friend and fellow singer Frances Cornford told him she was about to publish a small volume of her poetry he announced that he too was preparing to do the same. "They will review us together," he wrote with characteristic levity. "The *Daily Chronicle* or some such that reviews verse in lumps will review thirty-four minor poets in one day, ending with 'Thoughts In Verse On Many Occasions, By A Person Of Great Sensibility' by F. Cornford, and 'Dead Pansy Leaves & Other Flowerets' by R. Brooke. And it will say *'Mr.* Cornford has some pretty thoughts; but *Miss* Brooke is always intolerable.' (They always guess the sex wrong.) And then I shall refuse to call on you. Or another paper will say 'Major Cornford and Widow Brooke are both bad; but Major Cornford is the worst.' And then you will cut me in the street."

Rupert had a disappointment about this early book. It was never

published. There is no record of just why the arrangements fell through (the volume was to be brought out at the author's expense) but it is natural to assume the unexpected cost of publication was a factor. For Rupert has confessed that his income at this period was not more than £150 a year. Willing as he was to live frugally at home, he found his trips up to London and his repeated visits across the Channel were continuously narrowing his margin of safety. Eager as he was, when in London, to see all the current plays, he issued a warning to any friend who accompanied him that he would have to be satisfied with sitting in the pit.

Those visits to London were not all devoted to plays and pleasure-seeking. It is true that Eddie Marsh's flat in Gray's Inn was always open to him, but Rupert had a natural reluctance to wear out his welcome there. So he decided, when working on his Webster dissertation and delving into his sources at the British Museum, to find quarters of his own during the longer London sojourn. He settled in gloomy rooms in Charlotte Street, lived mostly on bread and pudding-raisins, and on his home visits worried his mother by both his capricious appetite and his waning vigor. He sadly missed the open-air life and quietude of Grantchester. But his urban existence was not without its compensations. At the end of his long day, hungry for companionship, he was able to seek out friends who could console his ever restless spirit and discuss with him the problems of authorship. His most helpful associate, during those sedentary days, was his lighthearted friend and adviser at Gray's Inn. There Rupert, ever eager to discuss books and drama, mingled with men of his own calling and inclination. Many a night these conferences on art and literature lasted until the break of day.

Rupert had the habit of boasting, from time to time, of his good health and his recurring periods of exaltation. He frequently proclaimed that he was "in the pink," a current phrase picked up from a music-hall comedian named Mark Sheridan. But those repeated claims of robustness were more a matter of wishful thinking than a statement of fact. The fire that could burn so fiercely in

that slender body not unnaturally exacted its toll. He was in truth burning his candle at both ends. Notwithstanding his passion to plunge into the stream of life, he was forever toying with the thought of death. This cannot be definitely written down to any uncanny prescience of his impending end. But, as with all great lovers of life, the grim reveling in the thought of nonexistence gave a finer relish to the sense of being alive. It enriched the passing hour and made more precious the too-brief sojourn in the sun.

Rupert, with his poet's impulse to drink life to the dregs, was all too soon reminded of the vulnerability of the flesh. In November he went home from the tumult of London to the quietness of Grantchester, utterly fatigued in body and depressed in spirit. He struggled on with his Webster dissertation—the thesis that was to give him his Fellowship at King's—during the next few weeks. But the tide of inspiration was at low ebb.

The result, when the final lines were written, impressed him as anything but satisfactory, a verdict plainly due to the fact that he had long since passed his fatigue point. The future stood uncertain and he expressed the wish to get out of England. Yet two days after Christmas he joined a reading party for two weeks at Lulworth. There the overtensioned strings snapped. He had a nervous breakdown. He acknowledged that he had collapsed suddenly into a foodless and sleepless Hell.

It was not Webster alone caused that collapse. It is claimed by some of his associates that this nervous breakdown was brought about by his quarrel with Katharine Cox, who had held both his fancy and his affection for a length of time that was exceptional with so variable a spirit. Rupert's letters at the threatened termination of an attachment which he felt, at the time, to be the one great love of his life were surprisingly bitter. But the causes of his collapse were more basic than the blighting of a romance. He had to pay the piper for a mode of life that was conducive to neither lustiness nor longevity. The time came when the ledger had to be balanced, keen as was his hunger for achievement. He was now allergic to obscurity, and his interests, at the moment,

centered more on work than on women. For, among other things, he was deep in the task of completing and assembling sufficient poems to make up a volume which Sidgwick & Jackson, the London publishers, were at last willing to bring out.

But the birth of the book was not without its labor pains. Mr. Frank Sidgwick, in writing Rupert on the venture, acknowledged that his house regarded the poems as well worth publishing and felt they might even get a good deal of attention in the press. But there was always risk in a volume of verse and the publisher proposed that he should issue the book on commission, since the author in this case had expressed his willingness to assume all responsibility for the edition ultimately paying its way. This, however, was not the greatest source of grief. When Mr. Sidgwick suggested the elimination of "The Sea-Sick Lover" and the substitution of the more innocuous "Up The Road To Babylon" (which had appeared in the *Westminster Problem Book*) the young apostle of frankness bristled with indignation.

It was the old struggle between editorial discretion and artistic daring. Involved in it was a further objection as to the sonnet called "Lust," with its overfrank eroticism and what seemed a dubious olfactory reference in the last line of the octette:

> As never fool for love, I starved for you;
> My throat was dry and my eyes hot to see.
> Your mouth so lying was most heaven in view,
> And your remembered smell most agony.*

These affronts to his brain children brought a revealing letter from the poet, who was ready to defend what he had absorbed from the warmer-blooded Elizabethans and preferred arresting strength to sugared safety.

"Is the objection to 'Lust,'" he wrote back to Frank Sidgwick, "only that it is bad poetry, or also that it's shocking as morals? I

* From *The Collected Poems of Rupert Brooke.* Copyright, 1915, by Dodd, Mead & Company.

can't see that it's any worse as poetry than the rest of the book.

"If its title is too startling 'Libido' could be substituted, though I'm afraid that would only make it more obscene." ("Libido" was, in fact, substituted, but later, whenever Rupert chanced across a copy of the book, he promptly and defiantly wrote in the earlier title of "Lust.")

"My own feeling," he continued, "is that to remove it would be to overbalance the book still more in the direction of unimportant prettiness. There's plenty of that sort of wash in the other pages for the readers who like it. They needn't read the parts which are new and serious. About a lot of the book I feel occasionally like Ophelia, that I've turned 'thought to affliction, passion, hell itself, to favour and to prettiness.' So I'm extra keen about the places where I think thought and passion are, however clumsily, *not* so transmuted. This was one of them. It seemed to have qualities of reality and novelty that made up for the clumsiness. The expression is only good in places. But the idea seemed to me important and moving. I know a lot of people who like my earlier work better than my present. They will hardly notice this sonnet. There are others who prefer my present stuff. They thought it good (by my standards, whatever they may be). And they weren't, I assure you, though they were of all ages and kinds, shocked.

"I should like it to stand, as a representative in the book of abortive poetry against literary verse; and because I can't see any aesthetic ground against it which would not damn three-quarters of the rest of the book too; or any moral grounds at all. If your reader has misunderstood the sonnet I will explain it to him."

It was the battle he was to fight over again with his good friend Eddie. Always willing to help and ready to encourage, Eddie had cast his inquiring eye over an advance copy of Rupert's "1911" poems and had found there certain things not altogether to his liking. This, however, did not stop him from writing a prompt appreciation of the volume for Harold Monro's *Poetry Review*.

It was a timely leg up for his friend, but far from mere rhapsody. This verdict as to Rupert's first volume, in fact, is so compre-

hending and so comprehensive that it throws a light on both his art and his life aim.

"It is almost disconcerting in days of so much critical insistence on 'Unity of Impression' to meet with a poet who flings himself with his full force and passion, and with a wild imperious gaiety, into and out of each mood that offers. Mr. Brooke can write in every tone, reverent, gross, grim, cynical, or tender. Now he sees the fullness, now the hollowness, of life. He is several kinds of a philosopher and an *enfant terrible.* Take his treatment of love. At one moment he boldly assumes a place among historic lovers. Next he finds that he is *amant imaginaire,* lukewarm, fit only to be spewed out of the mouth of love. Then he shudders at the time when his present passion will degrade itself into tolerance or worse, and again the comic spirit seizes him and he sees before and behind him a series of absorbing trivial devotions, each indeed a flash, but a flash in the pan. A too conscientious critic might argue that he is not sincere, that he rides round the world as though it were a circus, crashing through the emotions as if through paper hoops. This much is probable, that he writes more from his imagination than from his experience. That is to say, he is a young poet. . . . Meanwhile let us be thankful for a man who can make so much beauty.

"What are the influences that have moulded him? It is clear that he is a deep and passionate student of English poetry, and, like the love described in his own *Mummia,* his art is distilled from many essences of the past. But there are few echoes in his verse; one is inclined rather to say 'This would have pleased Browning, and that Rossetti.'. . .

"The range is wide, and whether his subject have most of wit, of mystery, of humour, of horror, or of pure beauty, the poet writes with a buoyant power and in a rich and solid texture. There is an occasional looseness or roughness; there is one black rhyme, and here and there a violence or a naughtiness. A protest must now and then be fondly entered on the old-fashioned score of taste. Yet it will be surprising if the book does not come to be looked

on as one of the stations of the fiery cross which the time now seems to be sending out through England.... Some of the poems are founded on that sudden sense of unreality of phenomena which everyone feels at moments and to which Mr. Brooke must be notably accessible. *Dining-Room Tea* is the record of one such instant.... There is a click, and the room with its contents is on the other side of the abyss; the lover, lifted out of space and time, sees for an age the essential spirit of his companions, fixed in the noble immortality of everlasting things....

"The effortless lift with which the poem ["Shape of The Human Body"] rises from this quaintness to the serene and stellar loveliness of its close is one of the lost trophies of the Seventeenth Century which Mr. Brooke has recovered for the art of today.

"And as he can look at his own species from the outside, he can also enter, with a strangely imaginative sympathy, behind the very eyeballs of another race. *The Fish* is in some ways his most remarkable performance. In octosyllabic lines of simpleness and weighted with sonority he puts into words the quintessential life of his subject."*

Such was the studied performance before the curtain. But backstage the scene was of a slightly different color. For to the poet in person his critic's enthusiasm was more tempered with admonition. Eddie's kindly heart prompted him to warm the water before drowning the kitten. He prefaced his protests with a paean of praise.

"You have brought back into English poetry the rapturous beautiful grotesque of the Seventeenth Century," he wrote to Rupert. "Marvell would have loved *Dust* and *Mummia,* and Crashaw *The Shape Of The Human Body,* with its lovely ending flowing so naturally into that bit of delicious absurdity. The fishing part of *The Fish* is as good as *The Prelude to The Rheingold* (though I rather wished the last two sections away, perhaps only because I am not sure what they mean)." Rupert himself had announced that

* By permission of Sir Edward Marsh.

the poem was "unintelligible." This sort of self-depreciation, however, was habitual with him. His poem "Grantchester," which sprang into immediate popularity after its first appearance in the King's College periodical *Basileon* in 1912, was described by its overmodest author as "a long, lanky, lax-limbed set of verses."

"The last three verses of *Town and Country* are superb," Eddie went on with an enthusiasm that was plainly meant to be encouraging, "and the whole of *Dining-Room Tea.* I never read anything more attractive than *Queen and Tragic Lady,* and *The Jolly Company* ought to jump straight into every anthology. *Flight* is very beautiful, especially the third verse. When I see you I shall ask you to explain the end, which I don't understand. . . . Now for a little abuse. *The Channel Passage* is so clever and amusing that in spite of a prejudice in favour of poetry that can be read at meals, I can't wish it away. But at the risk of your thinking me an awful 'borjaw' (as the man says in St. John Lucas' story) I must protest against the 'smell' line in *Libido.* For one thing it will prevent my giving away at least twenty copies of the book as Christmas presents to women; and even for my own sake I do think there are some things too disgusting to write about, especially in one's own language. I wonder you didn't call *Dining-Room Tea Pump-Shipping In The Drawing-Room* and write that the 'p' instead of the tea hung on the air in an amber stream! Surely the idea of the poem would have fitted in quite as well. Yet I am sure you prefer it as it is. I hope this will make you very angry."*

Rupert, while not slow to answer, did not do so in anger. Eddie's letter, he protested, had given him great joy. But the poet stuck to his point.

"The 'smell' business I don't really understand. Four hundred poems are written every year which end with 'the wondrous fragrance of your hair'—and nobody objects. People *do* smell other people as well as see and feel and hear them. *I* do, and I'm

* By permission of Sir Edward Marsh.

disgusted to think so. . . . Your suggestion for the recasting of *Dining-Room Tea* shall receive consideration when I am preparing the second edition! . . . Many thanks for pointing out the omission in *Menelaus*. It was entirely my fault. Two other misprints were successfully inserted by the printers after I had seen the final proof."

The reception of the poems which Rupert hoped were to bring literary realism back to English verse must have been disappointing to their author. He was already tired and depressed, at the time the press response confronted him, and even some of his most dependable friends were not slow in condemning what they regarded as occasional coarseness in the book. It was a reaction that touched him into bitterness.

"Even Mrs. Cornford," he wrote to his good friend Eddie, "tried to engage me in a controversy over the book—she and her school! They are known as the Heart-Criers, because they believe all poetry ought to be short, simple, naïve, and a cry from the heart. They object to my poetry as unreal, affected, complex, literary, and full of long words."

In yet another effort to extenuate his occasional lapses into what the Heart-Criers called ugliness he wrote: "The Elizabethans *were* unrefined. Their stories were shocking, their thoughts nasty, their language indelicate. It is absurd to want them otherwise. It is intolerable that these critics should shake the pedagogic finger of amazed reproval at them. . . . Such people do not understand that the vitality of the Elizabethan Drama is inseparable from its coarseness. Their wail that its realism is mingled with indecency is more than once repeated. True literary realism, they think, is a fearless reproduction of what real living men say when there is a clergyman in the room."

Some of his indignation must have stemmed from the comments on his poems in the public prints. The avuncular *Saturday Review* advised "Mr. Rupert to mar no more trees with writing love-songs in their barks." The *Daily Chronicle* said the poems showed promise and ventured that Mr. Brooke might some day be a poet

and not a little one. The *Spectator's* notice was of such a nature that the affronted poet could later proclaim he hated that paper. One commentator described it as a volume of *blague* and a frolic in the deliberated wit of sorrow. But most of the reviewers targeted their criticism on the six or seven vulnerably outspoken poems. Some were satirized; some were parodied. Rupert, still nursing his boyhood bravado in shocking the respectable and angering the hypocritical, had the modified satisfaction of finding he had fluttered the dovecots even if he had failed to set the Thames on fire.

Yet even in his dejection he refused to be a Saint Sebastian perforated with the arrows of enmity. He wrote to Eddie stating that the future was a mere mist.

"I want to stay out of England for some time. I don't like it. I want to work. I'm rather tired and dejected." Then came the familiar shield of flippancy. "I'm going to try to do scraps—reviewing and that sort of thing—in my spare time. I suppose you don't edit a magazine? I might review Elizabethan books at some length for the *Admiralty Gazette* or *T.A.T.*" [Edward Marsh was then Private Secretary to the First Lord of the Admiralty and *T.A.T.* was *Tattle amongst Tars.*] "or whatever journal you officially produce. At least I hope you'll issue an order to include my poems in the library of all submarines!"

The astute and understanding Eddie did not order Brooke poems in British submarines. But, not forgetful of the importance of proper connections, he maneuvered a meeting between Rupert and Edmund Gosse and Austin Dobson. To the latter, in his endless readiness to help, he had already introduced Frances Cornford and James Stephens.

"By the way," one of Eddie's letters warned his ward, "if you meet Gosse I beg you . . . to be nice to him. Also he is a good backer, and he may be useful to you. And a little kindness does wonders with him."

Eddie had paved the way for that meeting by showing Gosse and Dobson Rupert's earlier small volume, making it a point to

steer clear of the "ugly" poems as the book was being considered.

"You say," Eddie had written, "it ["Grantchester"] is hurried. I do hope you will polish it up just a little and make it perfect. I showed it to Edmund Gosse and Dobson and they were enraptured. A.D. said they were the best octosyllabics since Shelley, I think it was. Gosse wants you so much to leave out the couplet in brackets about 'shooting themselves' which he thinks silly and out of key."

The ever-watchful Eddie, by piloting the Librarian of the House of Lords past the Scylla of modernity in his friend's poetry, found the frank-minded Gosse outspoken enough in admiration for a new voice in English letters. He even read several of the poems aloud. But Dobson the perfectionist, who had stumbled on one or two of the overfrank passages when he chanced to look through the volume for the second time, was more critical. The man who reveled in the flavor of the eighteenth century and had given so much of his life to naturalizing on English soil the more exquisite French forms that had won him fame was not to be easily won over by the audacities of a tyro who could write of a Channel passage:

> Do I forget you? Retchings twist and tie me,
> Old meat, good meals, brown gobbets, up I throw.
> Do I remember? Acrid return and slimy,
> The sobs and slobber of a last year's woe.
> And still the sick ship rolls. 'Tis hard, I tell ye,
> To choose 'twixt love and nausea, heart and belly.*

It may have taken courage, thirty-five years ago, to pen lines so frankly involved with ventral issues. But today they fall on the ear with little sense of shock. The new candor leaves them merely mildly daring. And if there was once ingenuity in the introduction of the deglamorizing note in poetry long oversweetened with

* From *The Collected Poems of Rupert Brooke.* Copyright, 1915, by Dodd, Mead & Company.

romance, the realists of the newer era have succeeded in robbing frankness of its striking force. Shock is not a lasting virtue in verse, just as ingenuity as an end in itself is not an enduring asset in art. Rupert Brooke, with his courageous exploration of the subconscious, with his supplanting of older faiths by inner ecstasies, with his objective richness and his power of making even the sonnet dramatic, had and still has more substantial claims to attention.

CHAPTER 8

Sickness and Soul Searching

WHEN Rupert suffered an abrupt nervous breakdown at Lulworth he refused to agree with the good Dr. Craig that his illness was in any way serious. But he soon learned that the "amiable specialist" who charged him with having got into a seriously introspective condition was right. The tired poet could neither eat nor sleep. There was a drop of twenty-eight pounds in his weight. He had moods of melancholia. He even considered suicide, but decided he was too tired for that final effort.

So, after all his railing at fool doctors, he headed for Cannes. He had no love for the Riviera, but went to Cannes because his mother was already there to escape the dampness of an English winter. It was not a happy journey as he crept away in that final lassitude which is the price and penalty of intensity. He shivered at the thought of a prolonged stay on the Continent. From Anvers, in 1907, he had written that he would never go abroad again. He had no love for foreigners. The English, he claimed, are the only race who are ever clean and straight and beautiful.

At Cannes Rupert's overanxious mother plied him with pills and nostrums and kept taking his temperature until he revolted. The thermometer he broke and the medicines he threw into the Mediterranean. All he asked for was solitude and the chance to sun his weary bones on the Promenade under the protecting shoulders of the Alpes Maritimes and let nature recharge the run-down battery of energy.

But three weeks of overmotherly attention and Cannes with its "filthy English upper-middle class atmosphere" left him so des-

perate that he sought escape to other quarters. Avoiding all argument, he packed up and packed off to Munich.

That Bavarian town had long been the mecca of Cambridge students anxious for the veneer of Continental culture. Rupert had a more definite reason for settling there. From Professor Dent he had learned of a remarkable Munich pension operated by an accomplished woman artist who answered to the name of Frau Doktor Ewald. Frau Ewald promptly took the golden-haired poet under her wing.

There, in his own words, he "flapped slowly towards the surface." Under the treatment of a nerve specialist he gradually got back to a more normal state of mind and body. He was told merely to eat and sleep and do no brain work. He breakfasted in bed at ten and drank gallons of milk and liters of stout. He might stroll along the tree-bordered Isar, but was forbidden to walk more than two miles at a time. His one object in life was to relapse into a mollusclike torpor and let the tides of idleness bring back his lost buoyancy.

Frau Ewald saw to it that her guest-patient did as he was told. That strong-minded German widow, whose son had been at Cambridge two or three years before Rupert's advent there, had reason to be interested in the young Englishman who came to her nerve-racked and sleepless and ill—and with a supply of last-minute pillboxes and medicine bottles which his mother had insisted on including in his luggage. This well-packed little medicine chest Frau Ewald took possession of and promptly flung into the lake. She had her own ideas of therapy.

The chatelaine of the *Pension Bellevue* was more than a housekeeper. She was a woman of culture, and, like her son Paul, spoke the language of Cambridge without effort or exotic idiom. She was also a portrait painter, her canvases being marked more by vigor than finesse. In her free-and-easy home of transients she held a sort of salon frequented by English students and tourists partaking of Munich's richness in art and music and opera after the lighter pleasures of Paris. She was always the center of an

oddly assorted group. But her first command to anyone coming under her roof was to take a swim in the lake which her house overlooked.

This order she did not enforce with Rupert. Instead she resorted to a process of forced feeding, in which milk and good Bavarian beer were not unimportant items. To coerce him into quietude she decided to paint his portrait.

The portrait, in the eyes of all but its creator, was not a success. Her sitter, without his customary vivid coloring, emerged as a swarthy and decidedly Byronic-looking youth with a heavy mouth and too much hair. Later on, indeed, the poet's mother considered it so awful she decided to buy it, so that when it was once hers she might gladly watch it burn up in the fireplace. But certain friends at King's outbid the indignant lady. For a time, but only for a time, it hung on the wall of the Common Room of Rupert's college.

"The Munich introductions," the invalided exile toward the end of his visit wrote back to Edward Dent, "were invaluable, most especially to the never-to-be-sufficiently-valued Frau Ewald, who is my mother and all my aunts. Through her I got to know enough people to make that side of life happy at Munich—the rest being most pleasant anyhow. I have culled a thousand facile and shallow generalizations about Munich and about Germany, with which I won't bore you now. They are mostly not very favourable to the Germans as a race. I need scarcely say, though, that I can't speak a word of German. . . . *Ich bin,* my conversations in Munich always laboriously began, *ganz unmusikalisch.* . . . I stay here a few days more. I'd planned, or rather dreamt, a lonely pilgrimage through Constantinople and back by Dalmatia, writing the while. Alas, it is vanished! My widowed god-father is in Florence and my people promised I'd go and look after him there. I return to Cambridge in May, to the Old Vicarage. How one's character decays in the absence of people one can argue with!"

With work forbidden and time on his hands Rupert's letters from Munich were long and numerous. He wrote to Katharine

Cox (January 22, 1911), hoping she had been thinking about him and confessing that, when he had nothing else to do, he was ready enough to give way to emotion. "When I'm seen off by anyone on a train I always cry in a corner of the carriage as it steams away—even if it's only Aunt Fannie I've left standing on the platform.... I wonder if you would like to hear about my life here.... This fortnight's theatres and operas for me are Verdi, Puccini, Wagner, Ibsen, Goethe and Strauss. The intervals are stuffed with concerts. Painting—El Greco, my dear, is the greatest painter since Xerxes. And meanwhile I write poems about fish and limbs.

"Imagine me, last night after the theatre in a *café,* at a table with a professor of physics from Bucharest, an Australian sheep-farmer and a Rumanian economist explaining Moorian ethics to them in the vilest German, mostly by gestures. In March I am going to stay with him in Bucharest while in April he and the Australian are coming to Grantchester. The Australian anyway. He is twenty-three, a nephew of Andrew Lang's, and has spent his whole life on a sheep station. His simplicity is astonishing. He drags me off to see his favorite pictures, which are awful. He sobs at *La Bohéme* (which is right enough).... In solitude lately I've roamed the streets and sat in my room and thought out several subjects, viz, Speech, Lust, Style, Music, and Free Will. The truth about Lust came to me at *Aïda.* I jotted it down on my programme thus: 'Lust is so damned impersonal.' Oh, I daresay you know it. But it bears thinking on.... You're the absurdest, gloriousest, worshipfulest person in London and very fine and very good for everybody—I put my head humbly on your foot."

Rupert remained almost boylike in his habit of romanticizing his future and placing himself in regions satisfactorily remote and consolingly picturesque. Earlier in the year he had informed his college friend Geoffrey Fry that England would probably never see him again, protesting that he would grow red whiskers in his exile and take to Art with a capital *A.* Then, in the course of time, his friend might come and stay with him in his villa at Sybaris, or his palace near Smyrna, or his tent at Kandahar. He added that it

might even be on his yacht off the Cyclades. And there is something more than coincidental in that final designation. For time and time again, oddly enough, Rupert speaks of the Cyclades as the desired end of his wanderings.

There was, of course, a trace of forced levity in some of his prophecies as to his impending career and abode, as when he pictured himself as presiding over an Oriental harem and having a large one-eyed eunuch pitch any lecturing visitor into the sea whilst he himself went on painting ocean views in scarlet and umber.

But levity was not his only escape. For always, when low-spirited, he had the habit of probing his soul and questioning the why and wherefore of life. The thunders of these moral storms were more resonant during the uncertainties of adolescence; earlier in his Cambridge career we find him philosophizing to a fellow Fabian (his friend Ben Keeling who was killed in the battle of the Somme in 1916).

"I, writing poetry and reading books and living at Grantchester all day, feel rather doubtful and ignorant about the world—about England, and men, and what they're like."

He goes on to explain at length why he refuses to surrender to pessimism, even in a world which could not be Arcadianized as he had once wished. Life, he claims, is a dreary business and there isn't much potentiality for good in mankind. But there's a wild adventure in it all and it has its rare moments of enchantment born of the thought of being alive in a world of real matter, "and not that imitation gilt stuff one gets in Heaven."

From Munich Rupert wrote to Eddie explaining that his cure consisted in light reading and oversleeping, with no exercise and no thought, after which he warned his friend in London to be prepared to hear of the dead and doltish remains of the shipwreck that was Rupert.

Those dead and doltish remains, however, had their moments of animation. There was many a gathering in the good Frau Ewald's pension when the studio rang with music and buzzed with talk on painting and books and the theatre. A comely Frau-

lein Rungé played on her lute and sang French and German folk songs, and Rupert made none too successful efforts to interest her in the folk songs of his own England. There were always reminiscences of Cambridge to be exchanged with the vivacious Paul Ewald. And there was always the motherly yet fun-loving Frau Ewald to keep things interesting.

It was, for Rupert, a holiday from worldly harassment. But his divorce from thought and action could not long remain a complete one. The creative artist, even in exhaustion, could not be entirely estranged from his art.

"Your letter and review," he wrote to his ever-solicitous friend at Gray's Inn, "gave me immense and slightly pink-cheeked pleasure. I . . . felt passionately in agreement with it. I have an insistent queer feeling of having got rid of poems I have written and published, of having cut the umbilical cord, that they are now just slightly more anybody's concern than mine. . . . I had a letter from the editor of *The Poetry Review* (Harold Monro) saying that he was going to put in a long review and asking for poems to print in the same number. I am vaguely thinking of writing a few articles and things at intervals to keep myself going. I suppose you don't know of any editor who requires occasional, absolutely true, and infinitely brilliant accounts of books and things written by a man of immense learning?"

The umbilical cord may have been cut, as he protested, but Rupert's interest in his literary progeny remained more active than he pretended.

"I horribly feel that degrading ecstasy," he wrote to Eddie, "that I have always despised in parents whose shapeless offsprings are praised for beauty." [Eddie, in far-off London, had just said flattering things about Rupert's volume of verse.] "People are queer about my poems. Some that I know very well and have great *sympathie* with, don't like them. Some like only the earlier ones—them considerably, but the others not at all. These rather sadden me. I hobnob vaguely with them over the promising verses of a young poet called Rupert Brooke, who died in 1908."

Rupert with his passion for life, life both ugly and beautiful,

could not long remain inactive. He still had his intervals of self-analysis and his moods of depression. But reviving vigor brought him a touch of his old *joie de vivre*. This is made plain by a light-hearted letter he wrote to the joy-loving Jacques Raverat.

"Oh, yes, my dear Jacques, I've had innumerable new experiences. . . . As if I didn't come here exactly to escape experiences! I'd been having too many. Here I have none, except the ordinary ones in new dresses—and no responsibilities. Experience? One stays in England for that. . . . Verhaeren's god-daughter tells me he has written a play about Helen of Troy. The point is that poor Helen can't escape love. There's of course Menelaus, and the Troy business, and then afterwards people fall in love with her more and more. Everyone does it. It's her only relation with people. Even all the women turn Sapphist for her. . . . She decided to die, prays for death. The Gods answer with the greatest alacrity. They are, it appears, waiting, a queue at the Further Gate so to speak. Zeus promises her a magnificent time in Heaven. Venus, Juno and the rest will have to play second fiddle. There waits, divinely, for earth's most beautiful woman an eternity of ever-renewed coition, endless pleasure with the most glorious and lusty and untiring and devoted of lovers, the Olympians. . . . And she's so sick and bored and tired; tired of passion, and sick, sick, sick of love!"

It would be natural to assume that the enucleating idea for Rupert's "Menelaus and Helen" came from the Verhaeren play, the twin sonnets that so coincidentally end:

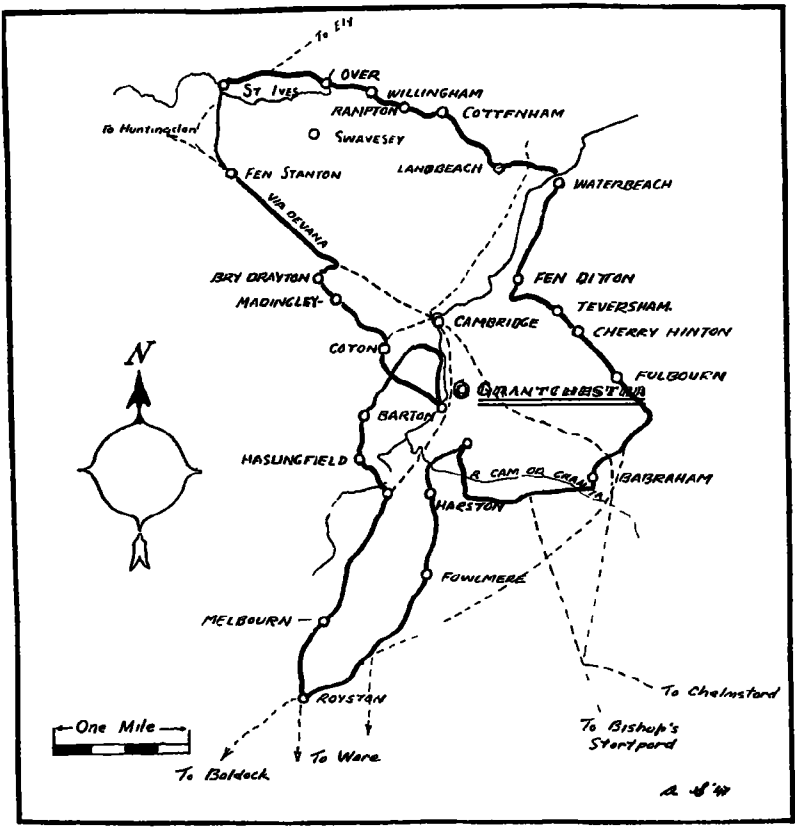
> Often he wonders why on earth he went
> Troyward, or why poor Paris ever came.
> Oft she weeps, gummy-eyed and impotent;
> Her dry shanks twitched at Paris' mumbled name.
> So Menelaus nagged; and Helen cried;
> And Paris slept on by Scamander side.*

* From *The Collected Poems of Rupert Brooke.* Copyright, 1915, by Dodd, Mead & Company.





Rupert, duly costumed, indulging in his love for dramatics at Cambridge. His group of amateur actors was known as the Marlowe Society.



The hamlet of Grantchester, where the Old Vicarage was situated, is at the center of this tour map showing the different villages so lovingly mentioned in Rupert's well-known Grantchester poem.

But the Brooke poem, it has been pointed out, was actually suggested by a passage in his friend St. John Lucas' book, *The Marble Sphinx*. There his older friend describes how Death, facetiously philosophizing, takes up a skull and discovers it is the skull of Helen, for whose sake Troy once fell and many heroes died on the dusty plains of Ilium. Death, turning the skull over in his hands, remembers how her body was once sweet with strange perfumes and the breath of her hair impassioned men. But, growing old, she lost her beauty and the once bright hair turned thin and gray. She grew into a withered hag who even in summer had to crouch over a fire to keep warm, while her palsied and querulous husband, Menelaus, forever upbraided her for her flight with Paris and mumbled reprovingly about her infidelities.

This, of course, was grist for Rupert's mill. It fitted nicely into his stubborn revolt against legendary grandeurs and that tendency to deflate traditional glories which was a continuing factor in his shock treatment of the established order. It held an echo of his own haunting fear of what Time can do to men and women. Yet his picture of Helen grown old is more than the reiterated cry of unnumbered poets against transcience, against death and decay. It was an oblique proclamation, like that of Shelley's friend Hogg, that the passion of love is largely a comic disease. And about love Rupert could be both bitter and flippant.

In February it was Carnival time in Munich. Rupert's participation in that German *Bacchus-Fest* gave him a fine chance to rail at the folly of voluptuous love-making. At one all-night frolic, he confessed to Jacques, he took up with a young Dutch sculptress and did his best to revert to paganism, preferring the "folly of the passions to the wisdom of indifference." But that experiment in intimacy and sensuality was only a saddening one, culminating in boredom. His heart was heavy as he wandered off down *Ludwigstrasse* on his way home. "It was just short of dawn," he reported. "There were nine dustmen, me as a Greek, naked and cold, and a crapulous moon. I felt rather tired."

Oddly different in note yet equally illustrative is a letter the exile

wrote to Frances Cornford during that same month of February. Busily idle as he was, he still had time for soul searching.

"The worst of solitude," he confided (February 15, 1911) to his more sedate-minded friend in Cambridge, "or the best—is that one begins poking at his own soul, examining it, cutting the soft and rotten parts away. And where's one to stop? Have you ever had, at lunch or dinner, an over-ripe pear or apple, and, determined to make the best of it, gone on slicing off the squashy bits?"

In the next half-page Brooke extended the allegory of the fruit to take in the timeless conflict between life's expectation and life's fufillment. After this parable of the endless duel between the evil and the angelic in his and all mortal clay the poet came out of the clouds and talked of home. With growing health he began to nurse a growing hunger for the England to which he once said he would never return.

"Your letter . . . made me shake with joy to know that Cambridge and England (as I know it) was all as fine as ever. That Jacques and Ka should be sitting in a *café,* looking just like themselves—— Oh, God, an incredibly lovely superb world!" Then, in a scamper of chauvinism, he expresses sorrow for the fat, muddy-faced, growling Germans who despise him for not knowing their rotten language. He even pities them as he sees them sitting in their cafés drinking beer and coffee and knowing nothing of the glorious friends he had in the England that would always be England. "That knowledge sets me dreaming in a vague, clerical, world-misty spirit over my solitary coffee. I find myself smiling a dim, gentle, poetic, paternal, Jehovah-like smile—over the ultimate excellence of humanity—at people of, obviously, the most frightful lives and reputations at other tables; who come presently sidling towards me."

Rupert was still young enough to generalize about race and venture into the debatable territory of national character. But all Germans weren't the ogres he once thought them. He had only to recall the motherly care with which Frau Ewald had looked after him in his illness to remember there were kindly souls in the

Fatherland he understood little more than he understood its language.

"But they're a kindly people," he went on in his letter to Mrs. Cornford. "Every night I sit in a *café* near here, after the opera, and read the day-old *Times* and drink—prepare to hear the depths of debauchery into which the young are led in these wicked foreign cities! HOT MILK, a large glassful. Last night I spilt the whole of the hot milk over myself while I was trying to negotiate the Literary Supplement. You've no idea how much of one a large glass of hot milk will cover. I was entirely white, except for my scarlet face. All the people in the *café* crowded round and dabbed me with dirty pocket-handkerchiefs."

Then came the tug of home memories and the ever-recurring nostalgic note.

"No, Cambridge isn't very dim and distant, nor Dent a pink shade. I somehow manage, these days, to be aware of two places at once. I used to find it wasn't worth while, and to think that the great thing was to let go completely of a thing when you've done with it, and turn wholly and freshly to the next. . . . Most of the people I see are working at some sensible thing like writing, music, or painting, and are free and comradely. I made one or two incursions into Anglo-German Philistia—and came hurriedly forth. . . . But in ordinary and nicer ways I meet a lot of jolly people."

"I finish this effusion at 2 o' the morning, sitting up in bed, with my army blanket around me. The bed is covered with Elizabethan and German books I may or may not read ere I sleep. In the distance glimmers the gaunt white menacing Ibsenite stove that casts a gloom over my life. The Algerian dancing-master next door is, for once, quiet. I rather think the Dragon overhead—the Dragon, that monstrous, tired-faced, screeching, pouchy creature, of infinite age and horror, who screams opposite me at dinner and talks with great crags of food projecting from her mouth, a decayed Countess, they say—*is snoring.*

"Oh, I sometimes make a picture of Conduit Head [the home of

the Cornfords] with Jacques in the corner and Gwen on other cushions and Justin on his back and Ka on a footstool and Francis [Mr. Cornford] smoking and Frances [his wife] in the chair to the right, facing the fire. . . . It stands out against the marble of the Luitpold Café, and then fades. But say it's true!"

Such was the exile's life in München, crawling about in trams, walking slowly about the high-walled streets, drinking coffee and watching life in *cafés,* both the *haut monde* and the demimonde, enlarging his waistline with forced libations of beer and milk, seeing pictures and plays, hearing operas in a language not his own, and in an intermittent and doleful way writing verse, but longing for England once more.

When he left Frau Ewald and Munich and journeyed to Florence to join his godfather, Robert Whitelaw, his health was quite restored.

"I have sampled and sought out German culture," he wrote to Eddie Marsh. "It has changed all my political views. I am wildly in favour of nineteen new Dreadnaughts. German culture must never, never prevail. The Germans are nice, and well-meaning, and they try; but they are *soft.* Oh, they are soft! . . . Here I live in a *pension* surrounded by English clergymen and ladies. They are all Forster characters [referring of course to E. M. Forster's *A Room With A View*]. But to live among Forster characters is too bewildering. The quaint remarks fall all round one during meal-times, with little soft plups like pats of butter. . . . Just now the young parson and his wife, married a fortnight, have been conversing. 'Are you ready to kick off?' he said. How extraordinary! What does it mean? I gathered it merely meant was she dressed for San Lorenzo. But does the Church talk like that nowadays?"

He was seeing life, and studying the stars over Fiesole and luxuriating in the Italian sunshine that bathed dark cypresses and time-mellowed walls. But he confessed to Eddie that he was thirsting for Grantchester.

CHAPTER 9

London Life and the Georgians

GRANTCHESTER, to Rupert, had become a sort of lost Eden. He could cry with envy, when he learned Geoffrey Keynes had been swimming in his beloved waters, and loathed him for bathing in his beautiful Grantchester pool.

When saying farewell to Germany, after his three months in Munich, he could write to Keynes: "I am now en route to the Hague. I'm determined to come to England again. There's not much point being anywhere, but writing about Grantchester gave me a bit of *heimweh*. I may be there next week-end. Shall we bathe! I haven't bathed since November. There's a lot to wash off. . . . My soul is on its last legs. Have you any cure for soul-sickness? It may be there is a herb growing at the bottom of the river just above Grantchester and that if I dive and find it and bring it up it will heal me. I have heard so. I do not know. It seems worth trying."

But the returned traveler's healing was of another nature. Restored to bodily health and his own country, he was determined to make up for his months of exile by plunging once more into life, and especially London life. His efforts to obtain a Fellowship at King's (which he finally accomplished in the spring of 1913) became subsidiary to newer aims and interests in no way connected with Cambridge. He wanted to be known as a poet. There was much to do and, with that repeated prescience of his own short life, he felt the time was short.

Yet, preoccupied as he was with poetry, he declined to be a mere bookish recluse. His visits to London were now more numerous and prolonged. He merged into a more social being,

anxious to meet people equally interested in letters, eager to know men of eminence who forgot their greatness when confronted by the young poet whose charm of face and manner could so readily smooth the path to enduring friendships.

Many of England's famous men he already knew. He had dined and talked with the ebullient Shaw and found himself more interested in the sage's red whiskers than in either his political wisdom or his paraded perversities. He had met Henry James, who was impressed by Rupert's sincerity and was slightly bewildered by the poet's exquisite temperament so easily linked to irrepressible experience. He had also conversed with Thomas Hardy, who nonplused him, not by talking literature, but by discussing with great solemnity the best manure for turnips. He had met Yeats, whose Celtic volubility put a damper on the English poet's customary loquaciousness, just as the Irish bard's admonition to Rupert to cultivate a more robust form of sensuality in his verse threw a slight chill over their companionship.*

Among other friends, during these formative years, must be mentioned Walter de la Mare and John Drinkwater and the Welsh poet William Henry Davies, the impecunious hobo writer whose real merit was first discerned by George Bernard Shaw. Added to that list must be the names of Lascelles Abercrombie and Edmund Gosse. Equally hospitable and interested in Rupert was John Masefield, who was soon ready to extend a friendly hand to the newcomer in the world of letters.

Still more closely associated with the Grantchester poet was the Scottish-born Harold Monro, who in 1911 founded *Poetry Review* and as a sort of open bazaar to that magazine established the Poetry Bookshop, providing both a meeting place and a sleeping place for indigent rhymesters. Monro, whose wild Celtic strain had not been entirely tamed by his four years at Cambridge, was

* This opinion Yeats later repeated to his fellow worker in the Abbey Theatre, St. John Ervine. To that Irish critic and playwright he said he thought Brooke was likely to be a considerable person if he got rid of his "languid sensuality" and got in its place a "robust sensuality."

more of a lover of poetry than a poet in his own right. He had the long melancholy face of the "black Scot" and was irascible and contentious and generous and hardheadedly impractical. But he was a great discoverer of dark horses. He had a genius for ferreting out young men of promise and making them known to the reading world. And it was not unnatural that in Rupert Brooke he found a figure very much to his liking. Their association was in many ways a rewarding one.

But the grand vizier of Rupert's London diversions—which so often were much more than diversions—continued to be the faithful and quietly efficient Edward Marsh. Eddie's rooms, in Raymond Buildings, were always open to the guest from Grantchester. On one occasion Rupert organized an impromptu tea party at Gray's Inn, appropriated the flat of the openhanded and indulgent Eddie—then busy at the Admiralty—and left a facetious note on the table expressing the hope that the flat owner himself would happen along before the party was over.

Perhaps no better picture of the relationship between Rupert and Eddie, and the degree to which Rupert was indebted to Eddie, could be presented than that given by quotations from the hurriedly kept Marsh diary.

January 29th (1912)—Frances Meynell asks me to write article on Rupert Brooke for *Poetry Review*.

February 7th—Finished article about Rupert.

March 23rd—To Rugby to stay with Rupert. Geoffrey Keynes to dinner.

March 24th—Walked with Rupert. Supped with Hugh Wilson and Geoffrey. (Rupert, who had been under the weather with influenza, claimed this walk and talk had effected his cure.)

June 25th—To the Irish Players. There met Rupert, who was in the pit and stayed with me.

September 17th—Rupert to stay with me. Dined with him at The Chanticler. Met George Mallory and Duncan. Rupert and I

fetched Gibson and went to see fire at King's Cross—all three to Raymond Buildings. (This, by the way, was Rupert's first meeting with Wilfrid Gibson.)

September 20th—Rupert, Gibson, Drinkwater, Harold Monro, Arundel del Re (the associate editor of *Poetry Review*) lunched at Raymond Buildings and we went to see the future Poetry Review House (at 35 Devonshire Street, Theobold Road). Rupert came back to sleep, bringing Denis (Browne) and Wilfrid Gibson. This was my first meeting with Denis, also with John (Drinkwater), and, I think, Rupert's with John. . . . Started notion of "Georgian Poetry." (An occasion of moment which must be taken up later.)

October 7th—Rupert came to stay two nights. He and Walter de la Mare dined with me.

October 8th—Lunched with Rupert and the Tigers and J. Middleton Murry and Katherine Mansfield.

October 12th—Sent typescript of "Georgian Poetry" to printer.

October 31st—Rupert dined with me and we went to Masefield's where we met the Galsworthys.

December 13th—I met Cathleen Nesbitt (the Irish actress Rupert was so anxious to know) for the first time in Harry Ainley's dining-room at the Savoy.

December 20th—Supper at Raymond Buildings. Cathleen Nesbitt asked to meet Gilbert Cannan. Rupert, Gilbert, Harry Ainley there. (This was Rupert's first meeting with Cathleen and the beginning of a rhapsodic though much-interrupted romance.)

December 31st—Rupert came for the night. To Hippodrome for "Hullo Ragtime!" (Which the revue-loving Rupert saw exactly ten times.) Then to see the New Year out outside St. Paul's.

January 1st—Rupert at breakfast. Started for Cornwall to visit the Cornfords till the 11th.

January 17th—Rupert and Geoffrey Keynes to see "General John Regan" (in which Cathleen Nesbitt acted) and to the Tigers in Chancery Lane.

January 20th—Rupert and Hugh Walpole dined with me at Simpson's.

January 22nd—Rupert, de la Mare and W. H. Davies lunched with me. Rupert had been to see Yeats and told me of his talk.

January 28th—Dined with Rupert, Cathleen, St. John Ervine. Rupert and Ervine and I to Shaw-Belloc debate. . . . Rupert read his play.

(This play was Rupert's *Lithuania,* the script of which was lost, a few days later, as he and Gibson scurried across London in a taxicab. The distressed author went to Scotland Yard early the next morning and the official response to an inquiry if his missing *Lithuania* had been found persuaded him that London was indeed a center of literary activity. "We haven't yet got through the lost manuscripts this morning" was the nonchalant answer.)

February 8th—To Cambridge with Rupert. Both staying with my father at Downing Lodge. Dined with Rupert and to Russian Ballet. With Rupert to Gambini's—met Denis Browne and Geoffrey Fry.

February 12th—Edmond Gosse lunched with me to meet Rupert.*

And so it goes on, day by day and week by week, with the quietly shepherding Eddie seeing to it that Rupert came into contact with people of consequence and got to know fellow workers in the ever-competitive world of letters. The innate modesty of the Downing Street pilot through those sometimes troubled waters held him back from any claim that he was actually shaping Rupert's career, just as it deterred him, when he came to write the *Memoir,* from quoting many a betrayingly grateful letter. But his influence on Rupert was as undeniable as his admiration for

* By permission of Sir Edward Marsh.

Rupert's gifts and his patience with Rupert's occasional perversities.

When, a few days before Christmas, Eddie had arranged for Rupert to meet an attractive and high-spirited young Irish actress he could have had little knowledge of how abruptly he was opening a door on romance. For the fact must be faced that Rupert promptly fell in love with Cathleen Nesbitt. It was not his first love affair, and it was not his last; but it was the deepest and most enduring one of his career. Cathleen was Celt enough to have a quick response to beauty of words and beauty of form; it was not long before Rupert was sending her scripts of his own, fresh from the inkpot.

The abrupt discovery of a new companionability led to something more than the focusing of attention on a new figure discerned through the mists of chance. They had, they found, much in common, a keen interest in the theatre, an ardent and emotional nature, youth and the impulsiveness of youth, and an unashamed and outspoken love for poetry. Rupert liked the generosity of her intellectual admirations but was quick to question the choice of her idols. Discovering they both wanted to talk at once, he suggested they lay down rules like those in a Shaw-Belloc debate, one to hold the floor for half an hour, then the other for half an hour, then each for twenty minutes, and later for ten minutes, to be followed by a formal vote of thanks to each other.

"I adore you," she found him writing from Eddie's flat, where the day before she had faced him over the teacups. "I was in a stupor all yesterday, partly because of my tiredness and partly because of your face. I'm gradually getting normal again.

"Why do you look like that?

"Have you any idea what you look like?

"I didn't know that human beings *could* look like that.

"It's as far beyond Beauty as Beauty is beyond Ugliness.

"I'd say you were beautiful, if the word weren't a million times

too feeble. . . . It makes me nearly imbecile when I'm talking with you. It's your fault. You shouldn't look like that.

"It really makes life very much worth while.

"I ADORE YOU.

"RUPERT"*

It was a front-rank assault as impetuous as Romeo's. And if the Juliet in this instance did not stay the siege of loving terms she had her moments of hesitation. Her life was a full and active one, almost as active as Rupert's during that crowded London season. And her woman's instinct warned her that a suitor so perilously appealing might be equally appealing to others. She even ventured a suspicion that all poets, being merchants in emotion, were apt to practice their art on impressionable victims and pass lightly on to other loves.

But the wooer in this case had charm, that charm which has the power to achieve ends without applying force. There were hurried meetings in tearooms, and dinners together, and a few briefly idyllic excursions into the country. To Cathleen, Rupert was more than a companion; he was a genius. When he received a prize for the best poem of the year in *Poetry Review,* she was one of the first to congratulate him.

"Oh, the prize," Rupert wrote back. "A double satisfaction in defeating Sturge Moore and James Stephens and Gibson and Abercrombie. And several others who are better than I am. *And in receiving £30!"*

In somewhat reluctantly permitting Richard Halliburton to quote from this letter Cathleen contended there was something that must be left out. For that was in the era of Volsteadism in the United States. And it would never do to announce to a country where prohibition held sway, she protested, that the happy poet was planning to devote the proceeds of his prize to a champagne supper for her.

* By permission of Sir Edward Marsh.

But life, with that same poet, was becoming something more than champagne suppers and talks over teacups. The Cambridge Romeo was doing more than climbing garden walls. Rupert, in fact, was a playboy only when the wind was northwest; when the wind was southerly he knew a poem from a dinner party.

He remained in many ways always a boy. But he had matured enough to learn that Utopias are not created by coquetting with Hope. A new note of practicality began to sound through the chorus of his widening interests. A more sober-minded determination to shake off inertia and achieve his own ends shows in his studied deference to new friends who could smooth the path up Parnassus. He was never a social butterfly. But that ever-appealing pulchritude of his, joined to an innate charm of manner, brought him friends who were as likable as they were loyal. It was not long before he was dining at 10 Downing Street, where his attention was divided between Mrs. George Bernard Shaw and Felicity Tree. Around the table on that occasion, were Lady Crewe, James Barrie, Raymond Asquith, Diana Manners, Lady Horner, Shaw himself, Augustine Birrell and Edmond Gosse. A little later at the Downing Street administration headquarters he sat between Violet Asquith and the Prime Minister and for the first time met Winston Churchill, already a great admirer of the Grantchester poet's verse.

The circle, under the watchful eye of Eddie, kept widening. During a busy summer and winter and spring in London, Rupert got to know Rose Macaulay and Hugh Walpole and Katherine Mansfield and George Moore. He dined or lunched with D. H. Lawrence, Granville-Barker, Basil Dean and Maurice Browne, who was destined to play a deeper part in Rupert's later career. He broke bread with Robert Bridges, Bertrand Russell, Ruth Draper, the Duchess of Leeds and W. L. George; at Clouds he spent a week end with George Wyndham, the debonair politician and editor of Shakespeare's poems. He was the guest of John Lavery, the artist, met the Duke of Westminster, and became

friendly with Lady Hamilton and with Sir Ian, who was later to come more intimately into Rupert's life.

He was, fundamentally, not greatly affected by this intercourse with the illustrious. He had no craving for grandeur. He could be quite happy with Lascelles Abercrombie in his rural cottage at Ryton with its improvised bathroom in a shed, where a stretch of rubber tubing with a funnel at one end and a pump on the other side of the garden path provided the guest with his cold-water shower. He could be equally satisfied with the humble quarters of Wilfrid Gibson at The Old Nailshop, when he could break bread with Robert Frost, then sojourning in Beaconsfield and compensating for exile from America by writing *North of Boston.*

Rupert's mingling with the intellectuals of London neither robbed him of his love of old clothes and open air nor divorced him from his affection for the informal. He may have become a new literary lion, but he remained a bit of a pagan. His ideal of existence was never that of a man about town. Popularity, he found, came at a price. That restless spirit, whose moods had all the convolved undulations of a Vitruvian scroll, found that even the hectic distractions of London could pall. He was not sorry to slip away from the social squirrel cage and spend a month with Dudley Ward in Berlin. When Spring came and he made a second break in his London life by an escape to Rugby he could write a rhapsodic letter to Cathleen on the joys of rural life.

"... Oh, it's mad to be in London with the world like this. I can't tell you of it. The excitement and music and the birds, the delicious madness of the air, the blue haze in the distance, the straining of the hedges, the green mist of shoots about the trees—oh, it wasn't in these details—it was beyond and round them—something that included them. It's the sort of day that brought back to me what I've had so rarely for the last two years—that tearing hunger to do and do and do things. I want to walk 1000 miles, and write 1000 plays, and sing 1000 poems, and drink 1000 pots of beer, and kiss 1000 girls—and, oh, a million things. . . .The

spring makes me almost ill with excitement. I go round corners on the roads shivering and nearly crying with suspense, as one did as a child, fearing some playmate is waiting to jump out and frighten me."

It may sound extravagant to the lay ear. But this euphoric note, naturally enough, has come from many a poet, from a Browning who found all well with an April world to a Heine who when young and dashing stood persuaded that he was ready to eat all the elephants in Hindustan and then pick his teeth with the spire of Strasbourg Cathedral. It is the essential inflammability of the true singer, the same "fierce affection for life" that Whitman made vocal when he talked of flinging out his arms and drawing all men and women in a close embrace, loving the touch of their hands and neck and breasts even as he loved the sound of their voices.

A fortnight before his expressed impulse to kiss a thousand girls Rupert had won his Fellowship at King's. His academic accomplishment, plainly enough, weighed less heavily on him than his osculatory ambition. He took his scholarly triumph with such Aprilian levity that he could speak of his formal admittance to the College as being "churched." He had, in fact, forgotten the exact date of his election and was forced to send to the august body awaiting him a telegram of apology. His explanations were accepted and the solemn ritual of admission was gone through the following day, after which, as was customary, the newly installed Fellow dined at High Table.

"I hear that you have won your Fellowship" was the message that promptly came from John Masefield, then at Well Walk. "I write at once to say how sorry I was to miss you and how delighted we all are to hear of your success. I hope that you may live for many years, adding to it year by year. . . . When are you going to come here again? I might say, it being Lent, *Eli, Eli, lama sabachtani.*"*

* By permission of John Masefield.

To this he later added: "Being a Fellow ought not to be so bad. It provides a livelihood and companionship, and both are good. And the former, for a man embarking on literature, is invaluable!"

But Masefield did more than give advice: he gave help. "I mentioned that you had done a play to Mr. Barker [Granville-Barker, who had already produced a Masefield play] and he especially urged me to ask you to send it to him. . . . I hope that it will be produced, and that you will go on writing plays, for you have such evident instinct for drama of a new and telling kind."

Rupert, with more than one iron in the fire, with his dream of electrifying London with a drama and his mounting hope of arresting the intelligentsia with his verse, did not take mere academic honors as seriously as he might.

"You can't think," he wrote to Geoffrey Fry, "how I despise you mere civilians now. *Jetzt bin ich Professor.* A grey look of learning has already settled on my face. And I wear spectacles." He even reported how he dined solemnly with very old, white-haired men at one end of a huge and gloomily lighted hall, "and afterwards drank port somnolently in the Common Room, with the College silver and the 17th Century portraits, and a 16th Century fireplace, and *15th Century ideas!* The perfect Don I!"

At that time, plainly, his interests were far from academic ones. It was the publication of his poems, more than any impending professional duties, that held his attention. Back in London, months before, a great idea had come to him. It came one night in Eddie's rooms, as he sat half-undressed on the side of the bed.

The talk, that evening, had been about England's neglect of her younger poets and how many of the newer worth-while bards were failing to win the audience they deserved. Rupert's inspired idea, to bridge the gulf between the song maker and the general public, was to startle them into attention by a book he himself would write. It would, reputedly, be from the pen of twelve different poets, half of them men and half of them women. It would be launched as selections from their works and would go to the

purblind reviewers altogether uncomplicated with personal issues. And that literary decoy duck, Rupert felt, might finally wake the ready world out of its torpor.

But the more sagacious Eddie, at this point, intervened. He not only foresaw the possible charge of duplicity in a left-footed venture like that but claimed any such device was unnecessary. There were enough living poets all around them, he maintained, from whom could be assembled a volume sufficiently impressive to interest the proletariat in England's weavers of dream. Instead of a one-man imposture, make it a biennial anthology of the best verse being written by a baker's dozen of actual artists in words.

Rupert was not slow to agree with this amended program. The very next day the perspicacious Eddie called a meeting of the clan for luncheon in his Gray's Inn rooms. Foregathered there, besides Rupert and the shepherding Eddie, were John Drinkwater, Wilfrid Gibson, Lascelles Abercrombie and the two editors of *Poetry Review,* Harold Monro and Arundel del Re. Eddie outlined the plan and it was agreed to with enthusiasm. From that impromptu conference emerged one of the more arresting literary movements of the opening century, the series of volumes which bore the title of *Georgian Poetry.*

It was time for a change. Victorianism was slipping into its twilight. The luster was fading from some of the older names. Kipling had become more imperialistic than Parnassian. Dowson seemed too sadly languid to be more than a museum piece, just as Housman stood too sadly wistful for the more turbid century that was opening up. Robert Bridges was too withdrawn from daily life and Hardy had shown himself too ruggedly monolithic and isolated to appeal to the mob. Yeats was too close to the Celtic revival to be identified with any sister renaissance in England. Stephen Phillips who, it was once hoped, might yet renew the noble tradition of English blank verse, was already in a mysterious and unmerited decline.

The newer group was emerging. Masefield and Noyes, Newbolt and Davies and Flecker, Wilfrid Gibson and Sturge Moore, Binyon

and de la Mare, were becoming known, though perhaps only to the initiate. There were, of course, others. But they were merely names to the man in the street still dubious about poetry being the ultimate luxury of the human mind. So when Edward Marsh, with the co-operation of Harold Monro, launched the Georgian Poetry movement it seemed like the rebirth of poetry in a grossly confused era when old values were changing and new problems were pending.

Rupert's interest in the enterprise was unbounded. He conferred with Eddie as to the contents of the first volume, "1911-1912," which was compiled from poems published during the last two years. The younger man's earlier wish had been to bring out a book that would shock the general public into attention, to confront the world with new forms and strictly revolutionary verse. But on the advice of Eddie and Drinkwater he conformed to the more dignified aim of attempting to elevate instead of trying merely to startle. Eddie, as editor, included five of Rupert's poems in his first issue, "The Old Vicarage," "Dust," "The Fish," "Town And Country," and "Dining-Room Tea." In this initial volume also appeared de la Mare's "The Listeners," a poem that carried its author into quickly widening popularity.

The success of the Georgian Poetry venture might well be called spectacular. The first volume up to 1914, had gone through nine editions. The succeeding volumes, after Rupert's death and even up to the "1920-1922" issue, were almost equally successful. There was a feeling with the first numbers that poetry had known a rebirth. It was a feeling that thinned out when the World War threw its shadow over a new hope and left many of the new singers merely dust on far-off battlefields.

The Georgians, it must be remembered, were more than a small clique intent on exploiting their own product. *Punch* could burlesque them as a bunch of "Poets at Bay," and excluded sonneteers could speak of them as "The Gorgeous Georgians." But a new interest was awakened in contemporary poetry and a new vitality was given to English song.

Rupert, fired by this knowledge, gave much time and thought to furthering the good cause. Even when abroad he sent back suggestions to Eddie as to how sales might be effected and the circulation of the book increased. Some of them were helpful and some of them were fantastic. One of his schemes, in a hazy vision of *réclame,* was to devise a map of all England, with each center charted and each district marked out. With the aid of this map, and with each city to be accepted as an officered fortress, a campaign for the dispersal of *Georgian Poetry* was to be carried across the country. In his new role of sales promoter, in fact, Rupert nursed the hazy idea of founding a hostel for impecunious Georgians.

He wrote with characteristic ardor to Eddie that he expected to hear of a second edition of *Georgian Poetry* being sold out when he got to London, announcing with joy that through certain efforts of his own he had sold twenty-five copies. He suggested wires that might be pulled and review editors who might be approached. He even agreed to public readings of his own verse at the Poetry Bookshop. Yet with characteristic playfulness he could concoct a mock report of the book's royalties in which his division of the spoils amounted to a meager ten shillings, tuppence-ha'-penny.

That first issue of *Georgian Poetry* was more than a monetary success. In it the discerning found a new hope and a new promise. Maurice Hewlett, writing from his six-century-old rectory house at Broad Chalke, informed Eddie that Rupert Brooke was truly a poet. "The Fish," he contended, ought to live and so ought any man who could do "Grantchester" so divinely well. Then, with a surprising interpolation, he announced that he regarded Davies' "The Kingfisher" as real music and perhaps the best lyric in the book. He described de la Mare as a real minstrel, singing like a bird because he must. Sturge Moore and Masefield and Gibson and James Stephens he praised, with certain qualifications. But the finest poets in the volume, he concluded, were Brooke and Davies and de la Mare.

When the triumphant Eddie sent this letter on to Rupert, who at the moment was in Cornwall, the dreamer who could be rated among the best of them all remained practical-minded enough to write back he hoped if those were Hewlett's opinions, he would be persuaded to publish them.

No consideration of the Georgian movement would be complete without a passing glance at Harold Monro's Poetry Bookshop in its misplaced locale on Devonshire Street. Into that gathering place of London's literati may have seeped some of the odors of Houndsditch, but the air of the shop itself was as Athenian as it was Olympian. It is true it stood in a run-down street proudly aloof from an opposing house of ill repute, where quarrels and revelry and curses often echoed into the night. But it was a green oasis of intellectuality in a desert of gin and decaying grandeur. Celebrities were glad to come to its gatherings and makers of song were ready enough to show their mettle at its upstairs seances.

Rupert was among the poets who gave readings there, his first one being on Donne—Donne who was extolled in the seventeenth century and ignored in the eighteenth and resurrected in the twentieth, to face, perhaps, the cyclic eclipse of being overlooked in the twenty-first. To Rupert he was still very much alive. The audience was small but adequately interested, though the guest of the evening (who at that time affected a broad-brimmed and somewhat cowboyish hat atop his long hair) must have been disconcerted with the not unfamiliar cry of "Buffalo Bill!"

At another reading, this time of his own poems, that rendezvous of writers was enlivened by the portly presence of Amy Lowell, who, because of the poet's naturally quiet voice and her position at the back of the hall, had difficulty in hearing the man on the platform. The individualistic and impatient woman from America promptly rose to her feet and shouted: "Speak up! *Speak up!*"

The Poetry Bookshop was not without more pleasant associations for Rupert. He learned with joy that on the day of publication of *Georgian Poetry* the Prime Minister requested two copies to be sent at once to 10 Downing Street. He learned, as

well, that on the same day of publication every one of the five hundred copies printed for the first edition had been sold out. The venture, which had once seemed precarious, proved a success. Rupert Brooke, to the *cognoscenti* of his country, became a figure worth watching.

CHAPTER 10

America and the Widening Scene

FIRES that burn fiercely are apt soon to burn out. Rupert, with his congenital intensity of spirit, could not bask long before one flame. The taste of glory was sweet and the distractions of Mayfair were manifold. But, as had happened before, neither the early savor of fame nor a philosophy of hedonism led Rupert to final happiness.

"The bitter gods gave me nearly everything," he could complain to Geoffrey Keynes, "and then have mocked me by showing me what they have not given."

It was not long before the turbulent life of London lost its appeal and the peril of remaining a lion among ladies presented itself. The overpopular poet began to feel the need of new and more virilizing experiences. He awakened to the fact that he was breathing too ethereal air in that voluble Parnassian circle where letters seemed more important than life. A craving for contacts with a wider world, a hunger for less dilettante diversions, began to beckon him away from even the England he loved and the Irish girl he claimed to adore.

During this interim of unrest Reginald Pole, who had gone to Tahiti for his health, wrote to Rupert enlarging on the charm of that island and protesting it was just the right spot for a poet overwearied with civilization. There was, at the time, no responsive move on Rupert's part, but the suggestion, apparently, was tucked away in the back of his mind.*

* When Rupert actually arrived at Tahiti, in the autumn of 1913, Pole had left the island just a few weeks before the wandering poet's arrival, much to the regret of both.

Justin Brooke had also suggested a visit to Canada, from which he had returned full of enthusiasm for frontier life. The King's College poet, whose wanderings had been restricted to the Old World, listened to his friend's talk about the wild beauty of the Dominion and even proposed that sometime they should go together and traverse North America from the St. Lawrence to the Rockies.

That projected pilgrimage, however, was never carried out. But Rupert's American trip came to birth from another quarter.

It came from an ink-splashed lady named Naomi Royde Smith, who as a girl had been captured by Rupert's early poems. When still an art student she had attempted a purely imaginary portrait of her poet hero. This she was proudly carrying home on a train when she realized the golden-haired man opposite her in the compartment was the living original of her drawing. Needless to say, once she had summoned up sufficient courage to show Rupert her portrait, the two promptly became friends. When Naomi was later made literary editor of the *Westminster Gazette*—a position she held from 1912 to 1922—she saw to it that not a few of Rupert's poems gained admission to the *Gazette's* columns. Her judgment as to their value was confirmed when he was twice awarded a prize for the best poem of the year and won a special prize for his study of Compton Mackenzie's "Carnival."

But her interest went beyond that. When it came home to her that her temperamental friend was at loose ends in London and sadly in need of a sea change she approached the managing editor of the *Gazette* with the suggestion that a series of travel letters from a brilliant young poet would be a good thing for their paper. Her arguments were so persuasive that her plan was approved.

There were other acquaintances of Rupert's who detected a growing weariness and unrest in their enthusiasm-ridden and overworked friend. He had too many irons in the fire. His social obligations had become exacting. But more exacting were his efforts to further the cause of divers short-lived magazines devoted to poetry. He fought for the survival of *Rhythm,* which later became

the *Blue Review,* just as he plied an oar for *The Gallow's Garland** and *New Numbers.* These meant, to him, more than a wider market; they were to be milestones on a new highway to the appreciation of poetry.

As a rule, those milestones failed to stand for long. Rupert's steadfast friend, Mrs. Cornford, felt the need of rescuing him from the maelstrom and was frank in suggesting a change of scene. "Frances and others," Rupert wrote in the autumn of 1912, "want me to go abroad for a year, and, for a bit anyhow, do some sort of manual work. Cleaning oranges in California is a type. . . . I daresay I shall go. It seems very vague and dim in my mind and I have no will. . . . At present I feel more like going to bed or into an asylum for three months."

The dimness went out of the picture once the *Westminster Gazette's* proposal was placed before him. He lost no time in agreeing to cross the Atlantic and send back a series of weekly letters that would record his impressions of the New World. He was to be free in choosing his points of interest and untrammeled in the expression of his opinion. And, since he had never been overburdened with pounds, shilling and pence, he was not ungrateful to Naomi for her adroitness in financing a journey that was to take him into outlands where adventure waited and a possible return to health of body and mind impended. He felt, as well, that even a qualified course in practical journalism would provide him with an escape from the webs of preciousness that an adulatory London was weaving about him. He had, from time to time, found brief escapes to primitive simplicities in his camping and tramping about his native shires. He now looked to the New World, the world that held "men with the bark on," to shake the aesthete out of his system and roughen him up a bit.

His preparations for the trip extended to the amassing of a

* This odd name for a poetry magazine derived from the fact Abercrombie's cottage in Gloucestershire was called The Gallows, from which it was originally intended to publish the book. The somewhat mortuary title was later abandoned, however, much to Rupert's disgust.

formidable bundle of letters of introduction, which he left behind him in the excitement of sailing, and in reading Bradley's *History of Canada,* which he found neither interesting nor helpful. His mother, who had been slow to agree to a journey so extended, loaded him down with a raincoat and steamer rugs and a hot-water bottle and remedies for seasickness and extra woolens. America she regarded as a cold and hostile country. But her fledgling poet, she realized, could no longer be kept in the home nest.

"I'm not coming to see you before I go away," he wrote from Thurloe Square to friends in the country. "I am so packed with things, and the world has me by the ankle. . . . Otherwise we may meet again in this world, I brown and bearded, you mere round red farmers. When that'll be I know not. Perhaps in six months, perhaps in six years. Or we may only find each other in a whiter world, nighty-clad, harped, winged, celibate. Oh, dear; oh, dear! Shall we go walks [sic] along the hills of Heaven

> Rucksack on back and aureole in pocket
> And stay in Paradisal pubs and drink
> Immortal toasts in old ambrosia,
> Fry wings in nectar on the glassy sea
> And build the fire with twigs of amaranth?

"I suppose it will be easier to fry on one another's glories, the tongues of fire, you know. Fried pigeon—but I shock not, and frogs very likely not. So we'll sleep soundly enough. And never meet. . . . My address will always be via Rugby. My literary agent is Eddie. My heart is yours."

But the impending change in his life was imposing a new seriousness on Rupert. Just before sailing he wrote to Frances Cornford, who was at the time staying in Dorset and living quite close to Thomas Hardy's home.

"I've been meeting a lot of poets in London. They were so nice, very simple and very good-hearted. I felt I'd like, almost, to live with them always—and protect them. But London for me

won't do. . . . For the moment one can't, *I* can't, be properly and personally all right till I'm married. But, oh dear, one's very reluctant to get into it without love, the full business—love, love! I feel so awfully hungry for it sometimes. . . . I hope you are both radiating health and energy. Make an extra bow to Thomas Hardy for me."

This confession as to hesitancies about marriage makes timely an allusion to the one earlier occasion when Rupert, who surrendered often enough to romance, actually stood willing to bow to the bonds of matrimony. He was nineteen when he met the object of his affection, and the girl of his choice was little more than a child. Her name was Noël and she was the youngest of four daughters of Sydney Olivier, who, after being active with Shaw and Wells as an ardent Fabian, was for six years Governor of Jamaica. Later he received a barony and as Lord Olivier took office in the Labor Government as Secretary for India.

During Rupert's first year at King's, Sydney Olivier (who was an Oxford man) came to Cambridge to deliver a speech on Fabianism. After the speechmaking there was a supper party in the Trinity rooms of Ben Keeling. There Rupert first met Noël and her sisters, Margery, Bryn and Daphne, just back from Jamaica. The youthful Noël was shy and silent, and it was not until a second meeting in the home of the Cornfords that a dropped coffee cup brought her and the poet closer.

The coffee cup that was dropped was full of coffee and when it slipped from her hand in that intimidating gathering of her elders she was covered with confusion. The ever-sensitive Rupert, conscious of her distress, hurried to her side, rescued the fallen chinaware and did what he could to impose an air of levity on the mishap. In doing so he wakened to the girlish loveliness of a small sun-tanned face with an extraordinarily friendly smile. At the same time Noël accepted her lighthearted rescuer as a benefactor and a princely being. He became her hero.

Later on, when she and her sister Margery were at Newnham, she was glad to join Rupert on walks and bicycle rides. She was

a willing worker when Rupert, under Rothenstein's direction, was splashing paint on scenery for their periodic amateur dramatic productions. She was a serious-minded girl, and Rupert, to shock her out of her solemnity, would threaten to paint her until she matched the frescoed flats all around them. With barriers broken down their friendship became an enduring one and what was at first mere camaraderie developed into something deeper.

There were picnic parties to Grantchester and canoe rides on the Cam. There was the Fabian Summer School in North Wales and the next spring a reading party, organized by Margery but including Noël, who under her hero's guidance took to reading poetry and could declaim Swinburne from the bow end of their drifting canoe. When Noël was sent off to school Rupert kept their friendship alive by frequent letters. When they were together again in a summer camp at Penhurst, Noël found she was always happy, mysteriously happy, when she was with Rupert. But no word of love passed between them. The astute Mrs. Brooke began to nurse her suspicions. When that lady took a house in Somersetshire, on the Bristol Channel, for the summer, she agreed that her son might invite certain of his friends there. "Yes, you may ask the Oliviers," she consented, *"but not that young one."*

Rupert continued to see much of the Oliviers at Limpsfield, their Surrey home, constant as were his movements about England and the Continent. Because of those separations he made a pact with Noël. Whatever happened, they were to meet again in twenty years. Wherever they were on the face of the globe, they would come together and find out if Time had done to them what it had so tragically done to the antiquated middle-aged people all about them.

It was a pact that was never kept.

When Rupert had to go to Birmingham for some dental work, he did his best to induce her to join him there in a secret rendezvous. This the timorous Noël declined to do. It was a failure to face romance that brought a long and indignant letter from the

impetuous poet. The next summer, however, saw them together, when the two were included in another camping party at Beaulieu River. It was a happy and carefree holiday, in tents shaded by stately trees, with a beach and boat near by and masses of purple sea lavender all about them.

It was that summer, when Noël was seventeen and Rupert was twenty-three, that he threw his cap over the windmill and told her that he loved her and intended to marry her.

That avowal was made when the two of them were out gathering wood for their campfire. Rupert, in his happiness, wanted to rush back to camp and impart the good news to the others. But Noël, with girlish shyness and perhaps a touch of sagacity, argued him into silence. The compact remained secret.

They saw each other at the Cornfords', and worked together in amateur theatricals; Noël read and praised the early scripts of Rupert's poems, and he made fun of her Latin and pleaded with her not to turn into a bluestocking. When Jacques asked the Cornfords and Noël and Rupert to visit him at his father's chateau in France, the following September, the two lovers knew happy days under the tall poplars beginning to turn with autumn. But as the leaves turned, for some reason unknown, their passion also took on an autumnal hue.

That transcience which Rupert was always lamenting began to make itself manifest in their relationship. Noël eventually left Cambridge and went to London to study medicine. In the summer of 1911 they came together again, spending August with yet another Devonshire camping party, where Noël was busy with her textbooks and Rupert was preoccupied with his poems. She still carried his manuscripts about with her, but the fine earlier flame had died down to the embers of mere comradeship. The following winter Noël was deep in her medical studies at University College and Rupert was in Germany.

The idyl had come to an end. And even before the impending flight to America it had faded into the twilight of things only mistily remembered. The ever-elusive Rupert, who so prized

loyalty in those he loved, found he had other paths to pursue and other wistful faces to remember.

When the *Westminster Gazette* project was first broached he wrote to his mother, enlarging on the need for a change of scene. The feelings of that puritanic and grim-minded woman, where her poet son was concerned, must have been not unlike those of a Plymouth Rock who finds she has hatched a duckling with decidedly pelagic leanings. But Rupert was now on his own. His one remaining parent was used to both his restlessness and his waywardness.

"I think now," he explained to her, "my physical health is quite all right. I shall go off to America or somewhere. I feel just as I did in the autumn, that it's no good going on in England. . . . It is only wasting time to go on without doing proper work. I think of going off to California or somewhere, and doing some kind of work. Or tramping. I shall take what money I have, and if they don't give me a fellowship, I can capitalize £200 or so, and that will last me for as long as I want to be abroad. I have no fear of being able to make a living now, for there are so many papers that'll print anything by me whenever I like."

That this disarming boast must be taken with a grain of salt may be assumed from a message from Ford Madox Ford, then editor of the *English Review,* for which Rupert had asked to do some reviewing, especially on historical subjects, and preferably on Professor Saintsbury's *History of English Prosody.*

That busy editor wrote back to the would-be reviewer that he himself was handling the Saintsbury volumes and mildly suggested Rupert might undertake an experimental notice of Frank Harris' *Shakespeare* and submit it for editorial judgment. He was averse, in this case, definitely to commission any articles, since, much as he liked the younger man's poems, he was quite unacquainted with Mr. Brooke's prose work; and a good poet, he stated, is usually an atrocious prose writer.

Five weeks before his departure from England Rupert attended a birthday party given by Violet Asquith, who was supplying

him with a number of letters of introduction to worth-while friends in New York. Of this event he wrote to Eddie: "I shall certainly appear on the 15th. I'm so excited. My health is now perfect, which is more than my industry and my inspiration are. Give me hours and times for Wednesday when you send the key. I'm going to tea that day with Cathleen, in her dressing-room."

Rupert's thoughts, plainly enough, were now definitely centered on Cathleen. Busy as she was with her stage work, and preoccupied as he was getting ready for his New World adventure, he missed no chance of seeing her. Their meetings may have been brief, but they were always happy ones. His surrender to her charm did not blind him to her talent as an actress. He even hoped that she would some day act in his *Lithuania.*

He worried when she was ill. On April 20 he informed Eddie that Cathleen was worse again and in bed. A week later he wrote that he had borrowed a few of Eddie's books for the invalid, "who's lying alone all day with her face badly swollen." But Cathleen was soon able to resume her stage work and even agreed to attend a farewell supper party Edward was giving before setting out for the Mediterranean in an Admiralty yacht.

"Cathleen was delighted and charmed with the idea," Rupert reported to Eddie (May 14, 1913). "I have made her swear to get up late on Wednesday and to rest between the matinee and evening show—she is still an invalid—so she'll be pretty fresh. She could think of nobody she particularly wants to meet save Gilbert Cannan and Henry Ainley. She has a passion for Gilbert I entirely deprecate. I suppose one could lure de la Mare away for the night? He might be enticed if it was represented to him it was the last time he would see me in this world." This, of course, referred to his nearing departure for the wilds of Canada.

Three days before sailing he sent a letter (May 19, 1913) to Eddie, who was lying off Corfu and basking in the brilliance of Mediterranean sunshine and Margot Asquith's epigrammatic outpourings. "I have been making the rounds all day, buying outfit and making bloody farewells." [Saying good-by to friends and

even casual acquaintances was always an ordeal for him.] "I went to take my leave of the Ranee last week. . . . I've booked my passage on *The Cedric,* Cabin 50, and Fate is under weigh. . . . I would send Violet [who was on the Admiralty yacht with her mother and Eddie] my love if I didn't think it might be lacking in respect. Is she witty in foreign parts? I can imagine her *amazing* about the natives of Cattaro, and Athens, and elsewhere. She sent me such a nice note before she started."

When Rupert entrained at Euston, Denis Browne was there to wish him Godspeed and present him with a box of note paper as a gentle reminder that he expected an occasional letter from his absent friend. That friend, in turn, advised Denis to keep busy with his music composing, so that one day they could do a show together where poetry and music and wit and tragedy and satire and suffering and triumphal processions would be so mixed up together "that the public won't know whether it's on its head or its heels."

It was a gray day when the *Cedric* sailed from Liverpool, but the skies were no darker than the heart of Rupert, who had no friends there to see him off. The thought of sailing away unnoticed, in the midst of all the shouting and waving and kissing and crying, was too much for him. He slipped ashore and confronted a ragged little wharf idler who answered to the name of William and presented him with sixpence on condition that William would stand on the stringpiece and wave—wave especially to him.

This William, with his sixpence clutched in his hand, duly did, adding to his valedictory salute numerous shrill and unintelligible messages. As the boat slid out into the channel and got under way the last object the lonely poet of Grantchester saw was a small and ragged figure waving a none-too-white handkerchief.

CHAPTER 11

A World Too New

RUPERT's *Wanderjahr* did not begin any too happily. He was never a good sailor and the North Atlantic gave him a day or two when he heartily longed to be back on solid English soil. He began to feel he had been a million years on the *Cedric* as it plowed westward from the homeland where he had left his heart. He acknowledged an inability to be sure whether it was this month or last month or next month. Once, he remembered, in a past existence he had been on land. But in this newer existence a school of porpoises could be an event and the spouting of a distant whale could seem important. When the lonely poet found that a fellow poet, Richard Le Gallienne, was on board, the younger man made no effort to meet the graying author of *The Golden Girl.* But he did meet that distinctly American dish known as clam chowder. He found something so arresting in the name of this New England concoction that it prompted him to work out a parody on Swinburne's well-known lyric.

If you were like clam chowder
 And I were like the spoon,
And the band were playing louder
 And a little more in tune,
I'd stir you till I'd spilled you,
 Or kiss you till I killed you,
If you were like clam chowder
 And I were like the spoon!*

* From Edward Marsh's *Memoir,* page lxxxi, published by Sidgwick & Jackson Ltd.; copyright, 1918. Quoted by permission of Sir Edward Marsh and the publishers.

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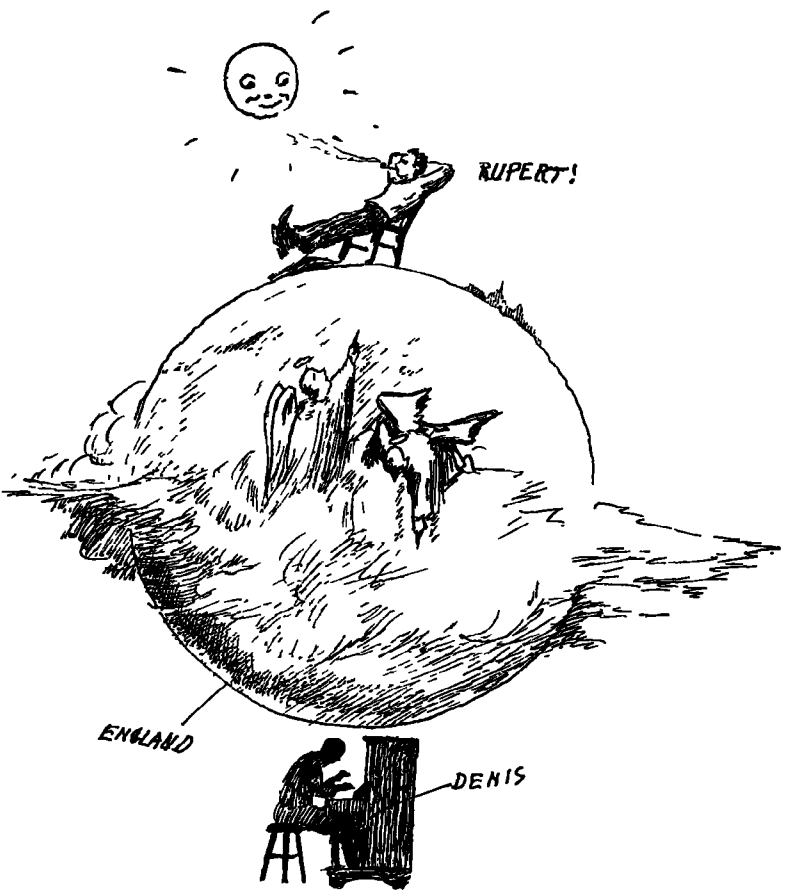
* From Edward Marsh's *Memoir,* page lxxxi, published by Sidgwick & Jackson Ltd.; copyright, 1918. Quoted by permission of Sir Edward Marsh and the publishers.

Other surprises, besides the persistent Canadian girl who tried to take him into corners to sing the Canadian national anthem, confronted Rupert on the *Cedric*. The author of *Lithuania* who had so assiduously been pulling strings and peddling scripts in an effort to get his play produced, found himself sitting at table next to a little man with a cold blue eye and a pleasant turn of American humor.

"He appeared to be interested in theatres," Rupert later wrote to Eddie, "so I took him into the smoking-room and delivered a lecture on Modern Drama in England, America, and Germany; on Theatre Managing, on Commercialism in the Drama, and many other such topics. I got on to *The Great Adventure*, which he thought the best entertainment in London. I patted him on the head. 'Yep,' he said, 'I've just sent a marconigram to buy that play for America.' I said, 'Oh, have you a theatre in America?' He said, 'In New York I own the Grand Opera House, the Metropolitan Theatre, the Knickerbocker Theatre, the Gaiety, and seven more. I have, in fact, some in every big town in the States. I'm coming back with a new Lehar, a Bernstein, two German comedies,'—I forget the rest. For he turned out to be KLAW, of Klaw and Erlanger. I felt a little like Dominick when he saw a lonely girl at a fancy-dress dance the other day and took her out to dance —and it was Karsavina!"*

"No Englishman can understand America," a youth of the New World told Rupert as they leaned on the rail of the *Cedric* and blinked up at the Statue of Liberty. In this respect the emissary of the *Westminster Gazette* proved himself unmistakably English. What interest his *Letters from America* now has stems from the moods and reactions of an oversensitized spirit estranged from his ancestral background and confronted by a civilization—when he stood willing to admit it was civilization—that seemed rough and rootless to a modern Marius the Epicurean astray from the recessional perspectives of a homeland old in time and tears. His report-

* Rupert's report as to the extent of the late Mr. Klaw's theatrical domain is, of course, quite erroneous.



From the South Seas Rupert sent this drawing to Denis Browne, showing how Rupert, as he himself expressed it, was "on top of the world" while his busy musician friend was toiling in the underworld of England.



Rupert and Duncan Campbell Scott, the Canadian poet, in Scott's Ottawa garden in the summer of 1913

ings, needled with the provocative bravado of an acknowledged *enfant terrible* of letters, were blithe and colorful. They were, alas, also hurried and often wrong, lacking at times in what Goethe called "the foundation of good-will" and restricted to car-window observations and the snap judgments of the tripper who has neither the time nor the intention to take the case off the watch and find out what makes the works go round. Yet they are not without their redeeming flashes of humor and the occasional passages of beauty one would expect from the author of "The Soldier" and "Menelaus and Helen." Only a poet could paint this picture of New York harbor, which Rupert found loveliest at night:

"On the Staten Island ferry-boat you slip out from the darkness right under the immense sky-scrapers. As they recede they form into a mass together, heaping up one behind another, fire-lined and majestic, sentinel over the black, gold-streaked waters. Their cliff-like boldness is the greater, because to either side sweep in the East River and the Hudson River, leaving this piled promontory between. To the right hangs the great stretch of the Brooklyn Suspension Bridge, its slight curve very purely outlined with light; over it luminous trams, like shuttles of fire, are thrown across and across, continually weaving the stuff of human existence. From further off all these lights dwindle to a radiant semicircle that gazes out over the expanse with a quiet, mysterious expectancy. Far away seaward you may see the low golden glare of Coney Island."*

His word pictures of New York remain merely word pictures. There was no penetration beneath the surface. The lost and lonely exile, with his letters of introduction left behind, gave more attention to the skyscrapers and street signs than to the inner life of that tumultuous city. One surprise that he unearthed in his rambles about the streets was that ". . . no English at all is heard. One is surrounded with Yiddish, Italian, and Greek, broken by Polish, or

* From *Letters from America* by Rupert Brooke, copyright (in England) by Sidgwick & Jackson, Ltd., 1916; copyright in United States of America by Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916.

Russian, or German." Another discovery was that all Americans wear belts and are unashamed to go about in their shirt sleeves.

On landing from the *Cedric,* and with no knowledge of the city, he had accepted the word of a busy pier expressman that the old Broadway Central Hotel (at Third Street) would be as good a place as any for him to take up his quarters. Rupert, quite naturally, liked neither that hotel nor its occupants. A letter to Eddie, whose yacht cruise had taken him to Greece, gives an inkling of the hapless tourist's feelings.

"I am so immersed in the gritty refuse-heap of reality that Greece is incredible to me and even London a lovely, half-forgotten dream. America—at least New York—is round and over and on me. New York is ridiculously inchoate. Do you know that it's the biggest Greek city in the world except Athens, and the biggest Italian city except Rome, and the biggest Jewish city except Vienna? I scarcely ever hear a word of English. . . . England seems to be disappearing rapidly. The chief topic which excites America is who—if anybody—is to be Poet Laureate. All the papers have immense articles, with pictures of Masefield and Noyes. (They mention everybody as possible except me and Wilfrid.) I am going down to the Stock Exchange tomorrow, where I hear they are betting on it. . . . I got a post-card (from Violet Asquith) with a picture of the island where Calypso dwelt. I shall retaliate with a portrait of Tammany Hall or of Teddy looking at the Statue of Liberty—or whatever stands for romance in this land. We don't go back very far here. But we enjoy what we have. Did you say you were going to introduce me to a rich widow in Canada?"

Before leaving New York he spent a day in the outskirts, in his own words, "flirting with Louise." He does not say who Louise was, but confesses that it was the first time he ever flirted with anyone named Louise and that the adventure had left him rather tired.

"I've been diving into many sides of New York lately," he wrote to Eddie. "The low foreign part is rather fascinating. Bohemia in New York is rather cheap, even worse than in London. Theatres

not very good, revues the best things they do. It's very queer how utterly they depend on us for literature. . . . The Laureateship is discussed ardently and continually. They think Le Gallienne is in the running! Otherwise they're fairly sane. Except that everybody here thinks Noyes a *big* poet, bigger than Yeats or Bridges, for instance. I can only gape. They also love him personally." [Noyes, who had married an American girl, visited the States in the same year that Rupert did, and delivered the Lowell Lectures at Harvard.] . . . I had a card from Violet, depicting the place where Ulysses met Nausicaä. The only retaliation in kind I could think of has been a picture post-card of the stone by the wayside where Bishop Berkeley sat while composing his celebrated line: 'Westward the course of Empire takes its way'."

Before going on to Canada Rupert made a side trip to Boston, which he found sitting in comfortable middle-age on the ruins of its glory, with its people "curiously English." But unlike anything in England was the Harvard Commencement which he attended, and unlike the dignified and voiceless cricket matches at Lord's was the Yale-Harvard baseball game where the players wore dingy knickerbockers and peaked caps that made them look like hooligans. It struck him as odd that the spectators should join vocally in the contest, with cries of derision at a mishap and mad shouts of joy at a triumph, so different from the polite clapping of gloved hands at the exploits of a flannel-clad cricketer at home!

The Lowell he became acquainted with in Boston was plainly not the James Russell who had once written an essay on "A Certain Condescension in Foreigners." For any sculptor who sought to figure the American Republic in stone, the visitor averred, would have to carve "a young man in shirt-sleeves, open-faced, pleasant, and rather vulgar, straw hat on the back of his head, his trousers full and sloppy, his coat over his arm. The motto written beneath will be, of course, 'This is some country.' "*

* From *Letters from America* by Rupert Brooke, copyright (in England) by Sidgwick & Jackson, Ltd., 1916; copyright in United States of America by Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916.

There is now no need to enlarge on this hurried traveler's twisted perspective or to take too seriously his inaccuracies of observation. If a hovering intellectual arrogance and a youthful lack of humility color his critical judgments, it must be remembered that, like many another poet, he happened to be born with one skin less than most mortals. There was need to protect the inner meat of emotion with a shielding bur of cynicism. And the reiterated note of derision in his letters can be written down as not so much the product of the traditional insularity of the Anglican invader but more as a response to transoceanic expectation of arresting surprises from the region of the untutored outlander.

He had an audience to startle into attention. And long before the newly crowned fellow of King's landed from the *Cedric* the culture-hungry hinterlands had been invaded by foreign celebrity and had later bridled at both the superior airs and the literary iniquities of itinerant Old World critics. They had long since accepted Dickens' *American Notes* as a classic in ill-tempered ingratitude, made doubly conspicuous by the more tactful Thackeray, who later proclaimed that no foreign visitor could understand America in less than five years.

The author of "Grantchester" in little more than five weeks could scarcely be expected to achieve any such miracle in comprehension. So what he missed in objective knowledge he did his best to make up for in personal enthusiasms alternating with occasional perversities. He doubtlessly remembered Oscar Wilde, who had showered England with verbal pyrotechnics and made his fellow countrymen sit up by reporting that America was an uncouth, savage, overlarge country and that the Falls of Niagara were merely vulgar. Shaw had shown that even a sneer at the ugliness of Buckingham Palace could start the tongues of his compatriots wagging. Rupert, whose fixed habit was to seek distinction in accentuating ugliness, did not neglect his poet's prerogative of intensifying his impressions. He had his moments of rhapsody on the way. When the reporting grew thin and the reactions seemed too dangerously contemptuous there was always Pegasus to back out of the stall.

Rupert's qualified admiration for Boston was based on that city's solemn friendliness, its eighteenth-century houses, its air of ancient Toryism and its general European aspect. He even caught sight of ivy on some of its walls. It impressed him as being to New York what Munich was to Berlin. Unlike Manhattan, Boston took time out to be hospitable.

"The tears quite literally well up into my eyes," he was willing to admit, "when I think of a group of young Harvard people I tumbled into—at Harvard. They had the charm and freshness and capacity for instantly creating a relation of happy and warm friendliness that, for instance, Denis has. It's a nice thing."

Business, however, was not altogether forgotten. While in the home city of the *Atlantic Monthly,* Rupert made it a point to call on Ellery Sedgwick, its editor, "to promote my own poems," as he confessed to Wilfrid Gibson. "But Sedgwick had just received a poem from *you,* 'Solway Ford'* [for which the grateful Gibson had been sent a "tenner"] and instead of letting me talk about myself all he would do was read your bloody poem. Had your masterpiece not interfered I would have made a vast impression on him. So *you* may be blamed for my poetry not becoming all the rage."

But the impression Rupert made on Sedgwick was deeper than he imagined. After announcing that he was Rupert Brooke, he explained that Lowes Dickinson had told him he must not miss seeing the *Atlantic* editor. Without more ado Rupert took proof sheets of the "Grantchester" poem from his pocket and read the opening stanzas. Sedgwick read some of the others and had the feeling he was beginning to know better this visitor who proclaimed with Byronic casualness he was on a trip to Hawaii to stick pigs. That noon, equally adventurous, he was to lunch with Amy Lowell. And that evening he was off for the West.

The *Atlantic* editor sat lost in contemplation of the blue-eyed traveler who talked so blithely of the hardships of the poet's life in a mechanized world. He saw before him "a face pagan, Praxi-

* Months later, on Fiji, Rupert invaded a hill savage's palm-leaf hut that had been neatly papered with pages from the *Atlantic Monthly.* There, staring him in the face, (as he wrote to Wilfrid) was the Gibsonian "Solway Ford."

telian, shaped before the 'pale Galilean' had made the world grow grey at his breath," Ellery Sedgwick records. "A young man more beautiful than he I had never seen. Tall beyond the common, his loose tweeds accentuated his height and the athletic grace of his walk. His complexion was as ruddy as a young David's. His auburn hair rippled back from the central parting, careless but perfect."

Eclectic-minded editors, as a rule, do not easily surrender to emotion. But this editor was persuaded that if ever poetry was made visible in the flesh it was at the moment standing before him.

"Man's beauty," he acknowledged, "is much more rare than woman's. I went home under the spell of it and at the foot of the stairs cried aloud to my wife, 'I have seen Shelley plain!'"

But a footnote must be added to this encounter and its impression on Sedgwick. Years later the yacht on which he was cruising in the Mediterranean put in at the island of Skyros in the Northern Cyclades.

"I went to see Brooke's statue, perched on a hilltop," he reports, "the face turned towards home. The sculptor had attempted to 'idealize' an unapproachable reality. To me the marble meant less than nothing. And I turned to the real memorial,* dimly seen in the distance, the shore where he lay buried."**

* Rupert's mother and friends caused an unpretentious marble monument to be erected over his grave on Skyros, with a local custodian to look after the burial plot. Of the more pretentious monument erected at Skyros Town the Anglo-Greek Committee of the Imperial War Graves Commission reported (in 1938): "The Secretary-General's report on the Rupert Brooke Memorial Fund (which has a balance of 11,221 drachmas) was discussed and it was agreed that General Melas should ask the Greek Government whether they would wish to have Major Menzies as representative of the Mixed Committee associated with him in the administration of the fund and the care of the grave and the monument." Both the hilltop statue and the humbler grave plot, at last reports from the island, are being decorously maintained by the Mixed Commission.

** From *The Happy Profession* by Ellery Sedgwick, pages 328-329; copyright 1946 by Little, Brown & Company and the Atlantic Monthly Press.

CHAPTER 12

New Fields and New Friends

THE observing reporter from abroad, already bewildered by New York, confessed that he was nervous about his visit to Canada, which had been described to him as a country without a soul. His train journey to Montreal did not leave him any less ill at ease. The slumberland intimacies of an American sleeping car were something new to him.

"I'm in an infernally bad temper," he wrote to Eddie (June 29, 1913), "because when I got into this bloody train I found there wasn't a restaurant car on it. And I'm half starved."

He had dined that night, in fact, on an orange, after being on his feet all day in the country.

"Now I'm shut up in the upper half of my sleeping berth. I'm emptier but a little easier. Oh, a mattress and a plank between us—me and a fat old lady! Every other berth in the car is shared between married people. So it is, naturally, the prevalent opinion that the fat woman is my wife. It causes her even more embarrassment than me. I'm clad in my new battik pyjamas, which are a dream. So I have some consolation in life."

When he wakened in the morning and by a series of contortions and fishlike jumps finally got into his clothes, he found himself looking out at the biggest river he had ever seen, the lordly St. Lawrence, curving blue and spacious off into the distance. Montreal itself, which he described as made up of banks and churches, he found as gray and dour as Glasgow. His survey of Canada's largest city was from a "rubberneck bus," or, as he termed it, an "observation-car."

Quebec proved more appealing to the overseas pilgrim. "It has

the individuality and the pride of a city where great things have happened, and over which many years have passed." And the St. Lawrence, from the Heights, seemed to him the loveliest river in the world.

But Rupert did more than absorb scenery and view the spot where Wolf and Montcalm fell on the Plains of Abraham. While lounging on Dufferin Terrace, with all the panorama of the Lower Town and the St. Lawrence before him, he lapsed into a more earthy mood as he penned a letter to his good friend Eddie.

"I'm writing on a terrace over the river, near the House of Parliament, high up, with a wonderful view. I read a book on Canada by a mild ass called ———. Presently came along a gentle youth and two girls, Canadian-French, and sat near. One girl was dressed in red and white and had distinction and grace and a trim loveliness. So I had a slight lust for her and wished she were alone."

That night, restless in bed, he read "Lycidas."

But by morning his thoughts were down to more material things. Learning that the editors of the *Pall Mall Magazine* were not averse to using some of his poems, he suggested that Eddie send them two or three of his lightest things, marked "two guineas each," except the one called "There's Wisdom," which might go for a guinea.

A few days later a letter from Eddie, with a clipping enclosed announcing the birth, on the ninth of July at Ashford Hill, Newbury, of a daughter to R. C. Brooke, facetiously warned his distant friend, because of the coincidence in names, that "evidently the Fat Lady seen in the Montreal train has slipped over to England and is foisting a son on you!"

But the same letter held less frivolous words. It brought a solemnifying report on the first edition of *Georgian Poetry*. "Monro," Eddie wrote, "has at last sent me £60 on G.P. So after paying myself back for disbursements I have £3 each to send to the contributors!"

Before leaving Quebec, Rupert essayed a brief excursion to the

Saguenay. On the boat that took him there he encountered two young American newlyweds, a stalwart youth and a girl with golden hair. They made love in the open and impressed the exile as being so blissfully happy that he enviously considered whether he should continue his journeys or head back for England where a lady equally attractive might be awaiting him.

He wrote to Cathleen, in fact, that it was touch and go for an hour whether he sacrificed his ticket, took the first boat to England, found her and never left her again. He decided, in the end, on the wiser course—or perhaps, as he suggested, only the firmer.

Being a poet, he sought and found relief in verse. Instead of hurrying to London he busied himself in writing a sonnet, a sonnet that contained the lines:

> And I go home with fever in my hands,
> My empty hands, back to my empty room.

After two days at Tadousac, where he had a chance to swim in the St. Lawrence and compose a "Hymn before Bathing," he returned to Montreal and took boat for Toronto. He picked his way through the Thousand Islands, which impressed him as varying in size from six inches to hundreds of yards in diameter, with every island that was big enough holding a rich American's castle.

After the medievalism of rural Quebec the province of Ontario impressed Rupert as more satisfactorily like England. He seemed among his own again and lost a little of his homesickness. He lost it entirely when, later on, he arrived in Ottawa and found that city a redeeming note in the tumult of New World expansionism. The leisurely and hilltopping capital of Canada, with its consoling atmosphere of safeness and dignity and massive buildings and shaded walks, proved something very much to his liking. His eight days there were, indeed, about the happiest of his entire Canadian visit.

This was due, largely, to his meeting with a comrade poet, Duncan Campbell Scott. Dr. Scott, after being Superintendent of In-

dian Education, in the Civil Service, had just been appointed Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs. He was by no means a stranger to London and its men of letters. Though twenty-five years older than Rupert, he found much to like in the younger man and much to talk over with him. Their indolently busy week together was a brightly rewarding one for the traveler, who plied his host with questions and from him harvested first-hand information about the American red man and the intricacies of Canadian politics, and at the same time had a glimpse of Canadian home life.

But the occasion can best be told in the words of the venerable author of *The Magic House.*

"Brooke was introduced to me," Scott writes, "by John Masefield, with whom I had corresponded for some time. The only other introduction he had in Ottawa was to Sir Wilfrid Laurier (the Premier). Sir Wilfrid asked him to lunch at the Chateau Laurier; there was no other guest. The House of Commons had prorogued and Lady Laurier had gone away for the summer. . . . Brooke was very favorably impressed by Laurier. But I remember he said the talk was general and rather conventional. Brooke had registered at the Windsor Hotel, but after he called on me he was not often to be found there. I cannot now tell the precise day he arrived in Ottawa. I failed to get the exact date of his registration when, after learning of his death, I got the Manager to let me cut his signature from the register. He had signed 'Rupert Brooke, Cambridge England.' . . . I gave him letters for Toronto to Edmund Morris, the painter, to J. S. Willison, editor of *The Globe,* to Newton McTavish, editor of *The Canadian Magazine,* and perhaps to others. I also gave him an Open Letter to all Indian Agents in the West, and later a special letter to Mr. Waddy, the Indian Agent for the Stoney Indians at Morley, Alberta. I wanted him to visit one of our Indian Industrial Schools and gave him a letter to the Principal at Brandon. I was anxious that he should see Indians at the Blackfoot Reserve and the Blood Reserve. But he could not find time for these visits."

Memories that go back thirty-three long years are apt to be misty, but there are certain impressions that have not escaped the kindhearted dean of Canadian poets.

"He called at the house the day he arrived in Ottawa . . . and after that he was constantly with us, and a few friends. He was content to look at the city and the country and did not want entertainment in the usual meaning of the word, though he had many of his meals here with us and at the Royal Ottawa Golf Club. We visited the Gatineau Region as far as Meach's Lake and Kingsmere, by motor. But there was little pleasure in motoring in those days. The roads were unpaved and the dust unbearable. . . .

"I know no one who so readily accepted the friendship offered him and gave everything in return, without the slightest feeling of strangeness. I can be factual in giving the opinion that he was homesick when he got here and went away with a different feeling for the opening vista of his journey. He read us poems from the 1911 *(Georgian Poetry)* book, and some new poems. But he always had to be coaxed to read. He was delighted to find on my shelves several of Wilfrid Wilson Gibson's small volumes. He had a great affection for Gibson. Our talks on literature were many. The two things I recall were his interest in John Donne and his desire to do some dramatic work. In fact I may say confidently that he was determined to make that a chief interest in his future."*

Henry James (in the Preface to *Letters from America*) had already spoken of Rupert as "happy, radiant, extraordinarily endowed and irresistibly attaching" and commented on "the vivacity and intelligence of life" in that bright spirit "condemned to sociability." This is confirmed by the kindly Canadian host who in eight short days made the wanderer from overseas forget his loneliness and face the rest of his journey with stoutened heart.

"As for his personal appearance," Scott reports, "so much has been said that any portrait of mine would be superfluous. There

*By permission of Duncan Campbell Scott.

was no doubt he was handsome, and everything about him went together harmoniously. I do not mean even to hint at any derogation of descriptions of his good looks or of his fascinating personality. . . . The final memory of him in my house is of his last evening, when he lay on his back on the library rug and played with our kitten called 'Skookum.' This Chinook word meaning 'strong' amused Brooke."

That Rupert had a reciprocal warmth of feeling for his new friend is made plain by a letter he sent back from the York Club in Toronto.

"Dear Scott:

(Dropping the 'Mr.' is to be interpreted not as a mark of irreverence but rather as a recognition of the Brotherhood of Poets.) Your introductions made Toronto very pleasant for me. Morris was indefatigably kind, and he and McTavish took me to the Arts and Letters Club where I found a lot of jolly people. Willison I only just caught before he went away, but I had a good talk with him. . . . I shall get to Winnipeg Tuesday the 30th, and stay a few days. After that the void. I'll decide there if I can make a trip north to Edmonton and will wire if I want a letter beyond that. Morris was very urgent I should take a trip from Calgary to see the Stonies. . . . I'd like to see them in their proper state. I feel a sort of sympathy with them, and friendliness. Morris will give me a message to the Indians themselves.

"I want a card, sometime, to say if you are definitely going to England. My envy goes with you if you do. You'll find a copy of my book put aside for you at the Poetry Bookshop—if you care to take it. And I'll write my name in it, on the good occasion when we next meet. If you happen to pass through Rugby or Cambridge you must let me know. There are a lot of people in Cambridge who would like to see you. [Scott was later elected to the Royal Society of Literature, of London.] There's a nice mad poet in King's called Williams (Iolo Williams, also of the Royal Society of Literature), who'd welcome you and take you up the river to

Grantchester. I write this as I'm being borne toward the roar of Niagara. I'm rather excited about it. I shall be eternally grateful to Masefield for having sent me to you.

"I'm beginning to feel sad I shan't be with the men in London to welcome you. I told Gibson, if you all ate together, an empty chair and a plate of soup were to be put aside for me. You'll see my faint ghost lapping at it like the ghosts in the Odyssey, and hear the shadowy plaudits. I hope Europe will inspire you to write about Canada. I always find I write warmly and lovingly about England as soon as I get out of it."

Earlier Rupert had written to Harold Monro, who, along with Eddie, was intent on looking after the wanderer's literary interests back in London, that he was just off to dine with the only poet in Canada, Duncan Campbell Scott, a very nice fellow, who was quite a big man in the Canadian Civil Service.

If Rupert, in a letter to Wilfrid Gibson, repeated his unilateral conviction as to the poetic destitution of the Dominion he was merely re-echoing the earlier charge of Sarah Bernhardt, who after a flight through three of its cities claimed that Canada had no poets.

"The only poet in Canada was very nice to me in Ottawa," he wrote from Toronto. "Canada's a bloody place for a sensitive real poet like this to live all his life in. He took me out to a Club in the country near, and we drank whiskey and soda. And he said: 'Well, here's to your youth!' And we drank its health—and I nearly burst into tears. He's thirsty to talk literature and he's very keen on all our work. He saw a little of the 1890-1905 men and he finds us far better. So he's obviously to be encouraged. He's probably visiting England in September or October. I gave him a letter to Eddie and Monro and told him *you'd* give him tea in your attic. Make Monro or Eddie get up a little dinner, with de la Mare and you and whoever of the immortals is about. Reserve a chair and a plate of soup and blood for me. And you'll see a faint shade lapping at the plate [sic] and hear the dimmest of American accents wishing you all luck. . . . I must go out to lunch at the

Toronto Arts and Letters. It's a club, Wilfrid, where they have ***heard of us.*** And one or two little men possess our works—not 'Georgian Poetry' but our own. Canada's looking up."

Edmund Morris, to whom Scott gave Rupert a letter of introduction, was a well-known painter of Indian heads (who unhappily met his death in the St. Lawrence only two months later). He too found his visitor both interesting and engaging. The two even formulated plans for a far-north trip up the Mackenzie River the next time Rupert came to Canada. That trip, which Rupert described as "a light ahead, a pleasant thing to contemplate," was, of course, never undertaken.

In Toronto, Morris proudly piloted the young English poet to the already mentioned Arts and Letters Club, then housed in the old Assize Court. There in an upstairs chamber where the combined gloom of Retributive Justice and lofty pilasters was modified by a large and friendly fireplace he conferred with the literati of the Athens of Canada, which looked far from Athenian to him.

He was welcomed there, as had been many another migrant celebrity, but perhaps his most sympathetic listener was Rufus Hathaway, bibliophile and poetry lover, who had already pored over Brooke's verse in a treasured copy of *Georgian Poetry*. Hathaway fell under the spell of the voluble young Englishman and that night, still talking poetry, walked with Rupert to his hotel. Rupert, warm with his subject, proffered to walk back with so responsive a stranger. With their talk still unfinished, Hathaway turned and accompanied the poet once more to his hotel door, where a return journey was undertaken, that the matter under discussion might be threshed out to the end.

That his partner in this impromptu marathon made an impression on the older man was later recorded in the *Colophon,* where Hathaway averred: "He seemed to me the most beautiful youth I had ever met."* The lover of books goes on to describe the golden-brown hair, worn rather long, the slight figure and the Greek-god

* From *The Colophon,* 1932, Part 12, pages 59-70, by permission of Mr. Elmer Adler.

face that had the coloring of a girl's, yet was not effeminate. He mentions the loose-knotted Byronic tie, the wide-brimmed hat and the gray tweed suit that were all a little the worse for wear, so that one Club member even referred to the stranger as "the man in the shabby clothes."

The visitor in the rough tweeds of Britain, Hathaway noted, had certain mannerisms. One was the habit of shaking aside the tawny forelock that festooned his ardent young face. Another was the trick of running his fingers through his hair when talking—and the more eagerly he talked the more explorative were his fingers. Yet another Olympian disregard of the conventions was his tendency to slip out of his heavy English shoes, when the occasion permitted, to free the prehensile toes with which, as a boy, he had been able to play marbles or toss a stone over a hedge.

His luncheon at the club prolonged itself until late in the afternoon and the impression he made on those who lingered to listen as he smoked and talked in front of the fire was a memorable one. "Edmund Morris," reported Augustus Bridle, who sat in on that conference, "never painted a Blackfoot head as interesting as the rosy-cheeked cherub face of this poet with a burning glow in the blue eyes and a large flourish of his great black hat, only a size or two smaller than Tom Mix's of a later date."

Equally interesting, however, is the impression the club made on its passing guest, an impression, it must be added, generously acidulated for home-consumption.

After explaining to his good friend Eddie that Toronto must be pronounced *T'ranto* he proceeds to enlarge on his Queen City reception.

"I've found here an Arts & Letters Club, of poets, painters, journalists, etc., where they'd heard of me and read G.P. [*Georgian Poetry*] and, oh, Eddie, one fellow actually possessed my poems. Awful triumph! Every now and then one comes up to me and presses my hand, and says, 'Wal, Sir, you cannot know what a memorable day in my life this is.' Then I do my boyish modesty stunt and go pink all over; and everyone thinks it's too delightful.

One man said to me, 'Mr. Brooks (my Canadian name), Sir, I must tell you that in my opinion you have Mr. Noyes skinned!' This means that I'm better than him, a great compliment."

It is scarcely necessary here to interpolate that Rupert remained oddly tone-deaf to the vernacular of the New World just as he remained untouched by the deeper trends of its national life. Derision, however, quite often lost itself in admiration. And the lonely and homesick youth knew kindness when it confronted him.

"But they're really a quite up-to-date lot, and very cheery and pleasant," he concluded his Toronto letter to Eddie. "Tomorrow I go to the desert and the wilds."

By "the desert and the wilds" he meant Winnipeg and Canada's fertile western prairieland that was to be known as "the Bread-Basket of the Empire." But before heading for the West he decided, naturally enough, to have a look at Niagara Falls. Emulating Oscar Wilde, he refused to be unduly impressed. He seemed set on making his response to America's much-commented-on waterfall as unemotional as was Samuel Johnson's to another waterfall, when the English lexicographer observed that he found it was doing merely what it had previously been doing.

The journalist's temptation to be startling plainly overrode the poet's impulse to be lyrical. Niagara, he could write back to his compatriots, meant nothing to him. It was merely a great deal of water falling over some cliffs. He found himself impressed, however, by the ceaselessness of those flowing waters. It struck him as odd that the noise they had been making and he was hearing was the same noise that George Washington and Poe had heard.

The lover of beauty could not long remain immune to beauty. Rupert, having shot his arrow of cynicism, proceeded to give the slain bird a silken funeral. After saying the Falls weren't very high, and were surrounded by man-made vulgarity, he could lose himself in a flow of rhapsodic prose. Those tumbling waters also touched him into a philosophic mood.

". . . the rainbows over the Falls were like the arts and beauty

and goodness, with regard to the stream of life—caused by it, thrown upon its spray, but unable to stay or direct or affect it, and ceasing when it ceased.... The river, with its multitudinous waves and its single current, likens itself to a life, whether of an individual or of a community.... And as incessant, as inevitable, and as unavailing as the spray that hangs over the Falls, is the white cloud of human crying."*

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CHAPTER 13

Westward the Course

HAVING disposed of Niagara, the visitor pursued his way to the Canadian West. He sailed from Sarnia to Port Arthur at the head of the Great Lakes, the Lakes which he said were too big, stunned as he was by the spaciousness of a country so different from his tight little island. He could exult, as well, in its "wildness." When impressively though rather mendaciously informed, after motoring twenty miles northwest of Ottawa, that there was nothing but a few villages between him and the North Pole he had written: "It was a thrill to hear it." When en route between Port Arthur and Winnipeg (while passing through Upsala, Niblock, Bonheur, Ignace, Raleigh, Kenora, Molson and many another town) he made the unique discovery that "for four hundred miles there is hardly a sign that humanity exists on the earth's face." This was, of course, a trifle wide of the mark. But the far-reaching and lake-gemmed woodlands through which he wound would naturally seem scantily settled, after those crowded English counties for which the lonely pilgrim was still a little homesick.

His impressions of Winnipeg were mixed, its architecture impressing him as being even more hideous than Toronto's, with no scheme and no dignity, yet with its citizens nursing a sort of gauche pride in their solidly pretentious streets. Winnipegers themselves he reported as "having the free swing of Americans, with the bumptiousness." Their manners "are better than the Easterners," though he complained of the immigrants who so soon "learn the American twang and method of spitting."

He was happier when he escaped to the "wilds"—a word which he uses again and again. His twenty-sixth birthday (August 3,

1913) found him roughing it at Lake George, some seventy miles out from Winnipeg. There peace returned to him.

"In such country as this," he wrote, "there is a rarefied clean sweetness. The air is unbreathed and the earth untrodden. All things share this childlike loveliness, the grey whispering reeds, the pure blue of the sky, the birches and thin fir-trees that make up these forests, even the brisk touch of the clear water as you dive."*

Rupert, always a lover of swimming, was not neglecting his chance for bathing in lake water so alluring. Nor did he neglect to write (July 18, 1913) to the city-pent Cathleen Nesbitt about it.

"... I'm lying quite naked on a beach of golden sand, six miles away from the hunting-lodge.... We bathed off the beach, and then lit a fire of birch and spruce, and fried eggs, and ate cold caribou-heart, and made tea. Eating a meal naked is the most solemnly primitive thing one can do; and—this is the one thing which will make you realize that I'm living far the most wonderfully and incredibly romantic life you ever heard of and infinitely superior to your miserable crawling London existence—the place we landed at is an *Indian Camp*. At any moment a flotilla of birch-bark canoes may sweep around the corner, crowded with Indians, braves and squaws and papooses."

The man from Cambridge may not have felt like a second Crusoe on that Manitoba lake but his taste of frontier life must have had a vitalizing effect on a mind long preoccupied with books and Russian Ballet. The shooting of a deer could seem a high mark in his month of strangely varied experiences.

But Rupert's mood, in exile, was not always one of exhilaration. He began to have his periods of mental torpor and depression which, he felt, could be cured only by a return to England.

"I don't get very miserable," he wrote to Eddie (July 9, 1913), "or go to pieces (save for occasional bursts of homesickness just before meals). But my whole level of life descends to an incredible

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muddy flatness. I do no reading, no thinking, no writing. And very often I don't see many things. The real hell of it is that I get so numb that my brain and sense don't record fine or clear impressions. So the time is nearly all waste. I'm very much ashamed of it all. For I've always beforehand had a picture of myself dancing through foreign cities, drinking in novelty, hurling off letters to the W. G. [*Westminster Gazette*], breaking into song and sonnet, dashing off plays and novels. . . ."

In his letters to Eddie, with their recurring sanguinary adjective (so many things were "bloody" to the poet who scorned the thought of being an aesthete), the reader finds much of that playfulness which can exist only between old friends. But there were times, as well, when the avuncular Eddie had to stand as a sort of Wailing Wall beside which the exile could pour out his passing woes.

Wilderness solitudes were not continuously appealing to Rupert. The prairie, as he pressed farther westward, struck him as a lonely place to live in. He was equally disturbed by the discovery that in Western Canada the towns were named by the railroads. He felt "uncomfortable" looking at these prairie towns, some dating back almost to the nineteenth century. When asked by a citizen of Calgary ("where it is sudden death to praise Edmonton") just where he, Brooke, came from, the son of the Old World, in obvious reproof of too much talk of boom towns and their growth, explained that his own town of Grantchester, having numbered three hundred souls at the time of Julius Caesar's landing, had risen rapidly to nearly four hundred by *Domesday Book*, but was now declined to three-fifty.

That obliquely proud understatement might, of course, be accepted as characteristically English, just as it must be remembered this reporter's Englishness was largely the source of his power and the wellspring of his poetry. His very insularity was a sort of burning glass that focused attention into flame. And he had always the old to contrast with the new. He may have hated London

for its fogs and its grayness and its "damn drizzle," but from any part of the world he was always glad to turn back to it. Perhaps some part of his dissatisfaction with the crudity of life in Western Canada was due to the fact that in Calgary he was reduced to washing out his own underclothes. That surrender to the occupational perils of the itinerant journalist did not harmonize with his English public-school ideal of the decorous. At Eton or Rugby the youthful scholar was not permitted even to carry a parcel in the streets.

He fell to thinking more and more of that finished land where life was more orderly and the ideas of gentility were less elastic. If he seemed at times unduly intolerant of New World ways it must be remembered that from Elizabeth to Victoria his conquering countrymen had been in a position to impose their mores and their manner of living on the subjugated outlanders. So it was not unnatural for a youthful bearer of the White Man's Burden to fall into the habit of estimating those outlanders as they approximated to his own habits and aspirations and outlook. Nor was it unnatural that after being repeatedly startled and disturbed by ways that seemed alien to him he should surrender to a sharpening sense of homesickness. He forgot the smoke of London, the dreariness of the Old Vicarage in winter, the flatness of the plain about Cambridge. He informed his friends at home that they were getting a sanctity and halo about them, as he sentimentally dwelt on all the dear dead days.

For wherever he fared Rupert could not forget those congeries of kindred spirits at King's and at Gray's Inn and Monro's attic bookshop where art and letters seemed more important than the tumultuous outposts of empire. Wherever he roamed he was marked to remember tree shadows on stately lawns and English ivy on storied walls, carrying in his mind as he did a landscape compounded of the western view of the Cotswolds and the Weald, or the highlands in Wiltshire and the Midlands seen from the hills above Princes Risborough. Sick for home, making Plymouth at

nightfall, he could think only of a rocky pool through which the Teign flowed north of Bovey, and of walking, wet with dew, to see the dawn come up over the Royston plains.

It is small wonder the invader of the West was far from happy in surroundings that were so new to him. He must be forgiven for his occasional impatience with a way of life that was foreign to his old and ordered island. For the impression cannot be escaped that he saw only the surface of the West, that West where unrecorded pioneers had toiled and perished but to the English wanderer was "now a row of little shops, all devoted to the sale of town-lots in some distant spot that must infallibly become a great city in the next two years. And in the doorway of each lounges a thin-chested, much-spitting youth with a flabby face, shifty eyes, and an inhuman mouth, who invites you continually, with the most raucuous of American accents, to 'step inside and examine our praposition.' "*

The ruffled invader of a new world could, at times, be both acid and exasperating. He termed Banff "an ordinary little tourist resort" and on approaching the Rockies announced that he stood face to face with beauty for the first time in Canada. He lamented "that ugliness of shops and trousers with which we enchain the earth" after describing Calgary's street-corner Indians "in blankets, sliding gravely through the hideousness that has supplanted them." It was the born romantic, rootless in an alien soil and unforgetful of grassy places in his homeland that had once been Roman camps, who accused the maple and the birch of concealing no dryads and decided that Canada was a godless place.

It was an empty land, the son of Warwickshire reported, and to love such a country was like embracing a wraith. The European, he complained, could there find nothing to satisfy the hunger of the heart. The air is too thin to breathe and one misses the friendly

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presence of ghosts, remembering how the soil of England is heavy and fertile with the decaying stuff of past generations.

In all travel recountals the observer himself rates an importance not inferior to his observations. This was what John Burroughs was groping toward when he said that to find the bird in the orchard you must first have the bird in your heart.

In Rupert's heart the English nightingale was always there to outsing the New World robin. The hermit thrush could not be heard when the skylarks of Somerset were still sweet in his memory. It took a hedge or two, in the midst of Ontario's barbed wire, to make him forget his homesickness. He missed, in some way, the joy of seeing a million acres of prairie wheatland turning gold in the sun and the thrill of crossing a snow-crested Continental Divide and threading down through towering peaks and tumbling waters to the pine-clad hillslopes of the Pacific.

The one spot in the West that awakened his enthusiasm was Lake Louise, in the heart of the Selkirks. There he did more than watch the peaks and the processional pines and the changing green and peacock blue of the water and the white cliff that overtowers Victoria Glacier. In that mountain Eden he met the Lady of the Chateau who made his visit an unexpectedly preoccupied one.

In a letter to Eddie, dated August 23, he enclosed a picture postcard and wrote: "This is what I see every time I lift up my eyes. Just imagine the Lake a deep milky green, very vividly so, and quite small, and you'll know I'm in heaven at last—and quite true too."

In a later letter (September 6, 1913), when his practical-minded friend was prodding Rupert to send back more poems, the traveler wrote: "As for my poems, I know I've only sent three. But damn it, what's the good of a friend if he can't sit down and write off a few poems for one at a pinch! That's what I count on you doing, if the editors press. I've a lot, halfway through, to be finished when I have leisure. I ought to have done them in the Rockies. But I had an episode with a widow instead."

To the Lady of the Chateau, who had left Lake Louise for St. Paul before Rupert deserted his Eden, he wrote: "I was lonely after you'd gone. I turned straight and climbed to Lake Agnes and there sat and looked at the valley down which your train had vanished.... There are only two chairs in my room. I am sitting on one. I wish you were sitting on the other.... At Field an Eastern train came in labelled 'Minneapolis & St. Paul.' When no one was looking I stole behind and affixed a tiny kiss to the rear buffer. Did it get to you? I feared it might fall off.... I love you for two reasons, or rather, since one does not love for reasons, I have two excuses for loving you.... One is, do what you will, you're a woman.... The other is that you're good. There are only two things in the world I think beautiful. One is woman's head and body, and the other is goodness. I don't really care a damn for mountains and poetry. Only those two. And I cry when I think of them—and in you. I adore you and them in you. And I want to bathe my eyes in your beauty...."

This apostasy to the Muse was not a permanent one. Odysseus went on to other Calypsos. He crossed the Great Divide and proceeded to Vancouver, where he wrote anxiously to England about his poems for *New Numbers* and Monro's *Poetry Review* and was worried because Naomi of the *Westminster Gazette* had reported her managing editor wanted only six of Rupert's *Letters from America* and could hold out only faint hopes for a second series in the coming year. He was drawn a little closer to the Muse when he learned from Eddie that *Georgian Poetry,* in spite of an attack by *Punch,* was then on the press for its seventh edition.

This good news was neutralized by the warning that the *Blue Review* (evolved out of *Rhythm*) was about to suspend publication. The passing of that short-lived magazine had left the guardian angel in the Admiralty office worried as to Wilfrid Gibson's livelihood. A reading tour of America was suggested. At about the same time Cathleen Nesbitt had an offer to act in the New World. Rupert, with his imagination fired by such events, wrote back to Eddie:

"What fun if both Wilfrid and Cathleen join me in these parts in the autumn! How denuded England would be! And how rich I! I think Cathleen had better learn up *Womenkind* [a short play written by his friend Gibson] and then in every town I'd be interviewed, Wilfrid 'd read, her portrait 'd come out in the papers, and then in the evening she 'd act *Lithuania* and *Womenkind,* and next day we'd share the profits. Will you be advance agent and courier?"

There were other tugs at his attention. He had boasted about getting thick-skinned and Americanized and audaciously demanding, but he felt relieved when his mother wrote approving of the *Westminster* articles. "They're not always very well written," he conceded to his usually exacting parent, "but I think they're the sort of stuff that ought to interest an intelligent reader, more than the ordinary travel stuff one sees. I hope they won't annoy people over this side. Canadians and Americans are so touchy! But it's absurd to ladle out indiscriminate praise."

He could, however, praise Vancouver, which he found different from the rest of Canada and unexpectedly Oriental. The harbor and the surrounding country, with its violet mountains and its distant snow peaks, impressed him as beautiful. And his exile, in the midst of those violet-tinted mountains, was made more endurable by a new friendship. As in Ottawa, his Vancouver hotel—"where they have telephones in every bedroom"—saw little of him. He preferred the home and family of Isabel Ecclestone Mackay, a companioning and companionable writer whose novel, *The House of Windows,* had been favorably reviewed in both the *London Times* and the *Athenaeum.* As Mrs. Mackay was also a fluent writer of verse and a prize winner in more than one poetry competition, the expatriate found much to talk about with her. A new friendship was sealed. And until her death an inscribed photograph of her golden-haired visitor stood on the work desk of the Vancouver author.

CHAPTER 14

Samoa and the South Seas

THE ostensibly idle but secretly busy Fellow of King's, who had the habit of blithely enlarging on his own mental inertia, was a more meticulous note gatherer than he pretended. He made a natural number of mistakes in his *Letters from America,* many of which were corrected in a later edition. But he at least tried to be a good reporter. His earlier explorations of the Elizabethan era had undoubtedly made him a better explorer of the New World.

So the discovery on his way from Vancouver to San Francisco that he had lost his notebook somewhere in British Columbia brought from him a wail of anguish. "Isn't it *bloody!* I've been prostrated with grief ever since," he protested to Eddie. "And God knows how I shall ever get through my articles on Canada!" That precious notebook, besides containing accumulated data and two months' travel impressions, also held a number of unfinished sonnets, and "all sorts of wealth," as he expressed it.

San Francisco consoled him. He liked California, where he found the people kindly, the women lovely and the scenery romantic. Rupert, with his genius for friendship, soon found himself the center of a new circle of admirers who seemed impressed by the fact that he knew Masefield and Galsworthy and had once stood face to face with Belloc. It made him feel, even though he realized this western state had a literature and tradition of its own, like a metropolitan among rustics, or an ancient Athenian who had wandered off into Thrace. He especially enjoyed his visits to the University of California at Berkeley, where he found himself very much at home with both the students and the staff.

"California is nice," he wrote to Eddie, "and Californians a

friendly bunch. There's a sort of goldenness about 'Frisco and the neighbourhood. It hangs in the air, and about the people. Everyone is very cheery and cordial and simple. They are rather a nation apart, different from the rest of the States—much more like the English."

On the same day, October 1, he wrote to Professor Dent: "I hope this will find you back in that lovely grey city of ours. . . . I'm getting along pretty well. Sometimes lonely, and always without the prick of all your brains round me. One needs one's friends. However, I'm learning things."

The spell of San Francisco was not enduring. The campus at Berkeley and the Golden Gate and the sailor faces in the waterfront bars lost a little of their picturesqueness. His homesickness for England and the Old World was sharpened by a picture postcard from Tarragona in Spain, which brought from him the cry that he was perfectly imbecile to wander about America when Europe was infinitely more romantic. He felt that he had gone soft through loneliness.

He even hesitated, in that nostalgic mood, to go on to the South Seas. He was so torn between two impulses that he finally took a coin from his pocket and, tossing it up, let it decide whether he was to go home or on to Honolulu.

The verdict was to go on. The following Tuesday he set sail for Hawaii.

He still toyed with the idea of impending death. After outlining his itinerary through southern waters to Eddie he speaks of a possible final resting place at the bottom of the Pacific, "all among the gay fish and lovely submarine flowers. Will you all come, like the Titanic widows, and drop some wax flowers, a Bible, and a tear or two on the spot where I'm reputed to have gone down? I hope so. But you may continue writing to me, and you may figure me in the center of a Gauguin picture nakedly riding a squat horse into white surf."

The less remote surf of Waikiki Beach captured neither his body nor his imagination. Honolulu was a disappointment to him. He

found it distressingly Americanized and tainted with the trail of the tourist. It was satisfactorily tropical, but as commonplace as an amplified Cannes. All he got out of it was a sonnet for *New Numbers*. On the way thither, he confessed, three passionate Pacific women cast lustrous eyes toward him, but, with a remembrance of the fate of Conrad characters who succumbed to such advances, he evaded them, usually by passing his hand wearily through his long hair and murmuring something about the soul of Maurya being a glimmering wing in the moth hour. The Celtic effect not being understood in that part of the world, the mystified ladies retreated.

There were more than passionate Pacific women on that boat. The man from Cambridge found himself walking up and down the decks arm in arm with a tubercular Russian. He chatted with a Bavarian priest and sat next to a youth who was part Danish, part Chinese and part Hawaiian. There were, in fact, many Hawaiians on board, who, of an evening, thrummed their ukuleles and sang mournful-noted little Hawaiian songs as the moon shone down on the opalescent sea and flying fish flickered along the slow-rolling waves.

Rupert felt that he was very far away from England. He saw himself as even more of an expatriate when he journeyed on to Samoa, where the pagan simplicity of life temporarily appealed to his semipagan soul. On that salubrious and songful island, he reported to Denis Browne, he was becoming indistinguishable from Robert Louis Stevenson, "both in thinness, in literary style, and in dissociation from England. God have mercy on my soul! . . . I have crossed the Equator and so am a Man at last. The rest of my life is to be spent in bartering cheap colored handkerchiefs for priceless native tapestries, and gin for pearls. . . . I hope the world is well. This one is. But it's another world."

His Gauguinlike dip into the primitive was not, and could not be, unmixed pleasure to that restless soul. "It's all true about the South Seas," he told his patron and agent back in London. "I get a little tired of it at moments, because I am just too old for Romance. But there it is. There it wonderfully is; heaven on earth,

the ideal life, little work, dancing and singing and eating; naked people of incredible loveliness, perfect manners, and immense kindliness; a divine tropic climate and intoxicating beauty of scenery. I wandered with an 'interpreter'—entirely genial and quite incapable of English—through Samoan villages. The last few days I stopped in one, where a big marriage feast was going on. I lived in a Samoan house (the coolest in the world) with a man and his wife, nine children, ranging from a proud beauty of eighteen to a round object of one year, a dog, a cat, a proud hysterical hen, and a gaudy scarlet and green parrot who roved the roof and beams. . . .

"The Samoan girls have extraordinary beautiful bodies and walk like goddesses. They're a lovely brown colour, without any black Melanesian mixture. Can't you imagine how shattered and fragmentary a heart I'm bearing away to Fiji and Tahiti?"

His interest in dusky Samoan girls did not swerve him from keeping the lines of communication open between him and the brilliant and ebullient Cathleen, whom he pictured as officiating with duchesses at Mayfair charity concerts and garnering new glory in new stage parts.

While he was losing his heart to those half-naked brown savages, he contended, he couldn't help thinking of her and of London and of what "a hell of an uncomfortable life" he saw ahead of him, since he always craved for too many different things. In his present mood, he wrote, he wanted to sit at the dinner table in Eddie's "digs" with Cathleen beside him, and bask in Violet Asquith's brilliance and Gilbert Cannan's wise silences and Eddie's monocular stories, and talk and talk and talk.

He decided, as he squatted in his Samoan grass hut, that when he got back to England he'd have the loveliest rooms in King's and spend three days of the week in London and entertain all the mad and lovely people in the world. In a later letter he wrote Cathleen that he wished he wasn't so infinitely far away from everything and that when he got back he was going to live all the rest of his life in London and have a private telephone to connect him with every theatre there. That resolve was based on the fact he had

missed the news of Cathleen's appearance in a revival of Barrie's *Quality Street.*

"I want to get hold of you," he wrote (December 19, 1913), "and take you out into the country from wherever you are, and watch something growing, and hear you talk Irish (which reminds me I suppose you'll have learnt to talk Scotch from that Barrie, now, and will be quite intolerably conceited). And I want to say poetry to you. . . ."

Cathleen had accused him of getting drunk on his own words. To that charge he retorted that he was deplorably and cynically sober and would not be bullied by badly brought up Irish girls who had a too good knowledge of mankind. And he repeated—on paper—his claim that the Irish girl in question was incredibly, inordinately, devastatingly, immortally, calamitously, heartteningly, adorably beautiful.

Sometimes, with a fortifying ocean between them, he told her why and how much he loved her. Sometimes, both sharpened and protected by distance, he grew more rhapsodic and broke into verse. It was wonderful, he said, at the end of his crowded day to rest

> . . . And think of what I've done and where I've been
> And write a letter to my dear Cathleen,
> Cathleen, loveliest creature, Nymph divine,
> Unhoped-for, unapproachable, yet mine.
> Fount of all beauty, Vision of Delight
> Whom I love all the day, and half the night,
> Child and yet Goddess, Woman, Saint, and Witch,
> Perplexing compound, teasing wonderment,
> Wiser than God and baby innocent,
> Sweeter than love and better than sweet Death,
> Lucretia, Helen, Mary, in a breath!

Rupert was an individualist, even in his wooing. He was equally an individualist in his explorations of Samoa, where he went about in pajamas and old tennis shoes, holding up a huge and abraded

umbrella to protect his head from the tropic sun. No noonday heat could keep him from seeking out strange corners of the island and no midnight could lure him to bed when he could sit and watch native dancers or native swimmers.

"Great bronze men with gilded hair and god-like limbs lay about on the grass," he wrote of one of these night dances to Denis Browne, "while their women held up pieces of *Kapa,* which is bark beaten into a stiff cloth and covered with a brown pattern. They grinned and beckoned and gesticulated, and the whole was lit up by the flaming torch lights against the tropical night and the palms and the stars, so that it looked like a Rembrandt picture. . . . Six men and six girls performed a *Siva-Siva.* A *Siva-Siva* is a dance, but not what your poor stepper of hideous American stuff or I or Monsieur Nijinsky mean by dancing. Much of it I couldn't understand. Some of it I felt it my duty as an English gentleman not to. Both girls and men were naked to the waist and glistening with cocoanut palm oil."

The inquisitive English gentleman did more than watch midnight siva-siva. By day he circled the shore line and went on long tramps through the tropical forests thick with dripping foliage and the strange cries of birds, drinking coconut milk as he went, swimming a river when it was needed. He climbed the steep hill above Vailima, where Stevenson was buried, and was arrested by the perplexity of his native guide who failed to understand how a foreigner always described as frail and slight of body could ever win fame such as the lank Scot buried in that lonely spot had done. It remained an anomaly in that island of brown-skinned athletes. Fame, Rupert meditated, was a curious thing. If R.L.S. had been seven feet tall, he decided, all Samoa could have understood why strangers from far-off corners of the world came to view a dead chief's last resting place.

Rupert confessed that he had a good time in Samoa, though the sun-bathing dried up his brain and the sea-bathing washed away his poetry. His literary impulses, with no letters to send back to the *Westminster Gazette,* were restricted to sporadic reports to

friends at home. He was living sonnets, instead of writing them.

"I lived in a Samoan village," he wrote to Cathleen, "in a hut. It was splendid. The most ideal life in the world. One long picnic. I'm very brown and thin and wiry. Tomorrow I go on a week's cruise to Kandavu, an island eighty miles south. After that a walk across the island. But don't be frightened for a Georgian Poet's safety. This part of the world is utterly and disappointingly civilized. It's as safe as Surrey to travel in. And a damned sight safer than California."

How civilization could so disappointingly creep into those remote regions was brought home to him when he spent a night in a hill village and there encountered a chief, supposedly wild, who had acquired an odd craving for what in a later day would have been called Pin-Up Girls. His hut was festooned with them.

"He used to send down to the coast and buy or steal any old number of *The Sketch*. Then he'd cut out the most attractive pictures and nail them up to the beams of his hut. I spent an admiring hour in front of this extraordinary collection, lecturing on them, to the elation of the villagers. Between a full-page portrait of a golf champion, driving (which was believed to be a warrior smiting his foes), and a fashion-plate displaying the fashions for 1911, was—who but Lillah McCarthy as 'Jocasta,' looking very religious and incestuous and in danger, I fancy, of supplanting the Virgin Mary in the religious affections of the village."

If Rupert surrendered to the lure of the South Seas it was only a temporary surrender. From Tahiti he wrote to Cathleen saying he had decided to stay in the South Pacific, to stay among his island friends and let Time flow over him until he turned to white sand and a little scented dust. But certain memories, he later confessed, were making him relent, memories of English hedges and primroses and a certain worthless Irish lady.

For his islands of enchantment weren't living up to his expectations. Existence there seemed to be suffering from the mystical misfortune of being made too good. That aimless life of swimming and hill climbing, of eating and idling, of flower-garlanded



Ellen Van Volkenburg as the murderous Daughter in the Chicago Little Theatre production of Rupert's *Lithuania*



This, Rupert's favorite photograph of Cathleen, was carried by him to the Eastern Mediterranean and was found among his effects after his death off Skyros. It was sent, along with his other possessions, back to England. Later the picture and a precious bundle of love letters were returned to Cathleen.

dancing and singing on coral beaches, left him repeatedly disturbed with the discovery that the intellect could go to sleep under such animalizing conditions. A white man living with these Samoans, he confessed, soon felt his mind as deplorably dull as his skin was pale. A mere European seemed unhealthy among such glorious golden-brown bodies. And there were too many thoughts of England at the back of the exile's brain to let the land of the hula-hula and the ukulele entirely enslave him.

Of the Samoan dances he wrote enthusiastically to his music-loving friend, Denis Browne. "I prefer watching a *Siva-Siva* to observing Nijinsky. Oh, dear, I so wish you'd been with me for some of these native dances. I've got no ear, and I can't get the tunes down. They're very simple, just a few bars with a scale of about five notes, repeated over and over again. But it's the *rhythm* that gets you. They get extraordinarily rhythmic effects, everybody beating their hands or tapping with a stick, and the dancers swaying their bodies and tapping with their feet. None of that damned bounding and pirouetting. Just *styliserte* pantomime, sometimes slightly indecent, but most exciting. Next time I get sick of England I'm going to bring you along out here, and work the whole thing out."

The muted poet then stops to philosophize on the effects of his sojourn in that temporary Eden where the brown-bodied women could make Karsavina seem clumsy and Helen of Troy look like a frump.

"You won't know me when—if ever—I return," he warned his friend Denis. "Many things I have lost; my knowledge of art and literature, my fragmentary manners, my acquaintance with the English tongue, and any slight intelligence I ever had. But I have gained other things; a rich red-brown for my skin, a knowledge of mixed drinks, and ability to talk or drink with any kind of man—and a large *repertoire* of dirty stories. Am I richer or poorer? I don't know. I only regret that I shall never be able to mix in your or any intelligent circles again."

When he left Samoa and went to Fiji he was disappointed in

that British colony whose once wild natives had been so satisfactorily tamed by Wesleyan missionaries and whose protocol-loving English families make calls on third Thursdays and reverence the Book of Etiquette.

"I've just got into this place from Samoa," he wrote to Edmund Gosse, about the middle of November. "I said to myself 'Fiji is obviously the wildest place I can get to round here. The name, and pictures of the inhabitants, prove it.' And lo, a large English town [Suva], with two banks, several churches, dental surgeons, a large gaol, auctioneers, bookmakers, two newspapers and all the other appurtenances of civilization! . . ."

The damp heat of Suva, the cloud-racked gloom of the mountains across the bay, the port-of-call riffraff and the pompous officials, the motley street life with its childhearted Fijians and its solemn indentured Hindoos, the weedy Australian clerks who were English without tradition and Yankees without go—all combined to persuade him he had not yet reached the fabled island of Calypso. Even England was better. He could still be satisfied with a landed gentry and ten shillings on wheat and hanging for sheep-stealing and the Established Church from which he had sprung.

The mercurial poet had forgotten how he had once railed at town life in England and shuddered at the thought of a Sunday in Rugby, where everyone wore tidy clothes—except him—and duly collared and hatted and gloved went on sedate walks to the sound of equally sedate church bells.

It was once more a case of the distant field looking green, the vanished Eden taking on new vistas of enchantment. For, some six weeks before Christmas, with home thoughts from abroad, he dispatched a letter to Eddie, who had written that Naomi Smith was asking for more travel material on the chance it might be acceptable to the high gods of the *Gazette*.

"God knows when you will get this, about Christmas, I suppose," Rupert wrote to Eddie (November 13, 1913). "My *reason* tells me you will be slushing through London mud in a taxi, with a heavy drizzle falling, and a chilly damp mist in the air. . . . But

I can't help *thinking* of you trotting through crisp snow to a country church, holly-decorated, with little robins picking crumbs all round, and church bells playing out Brother Tennyson's *In Memoriam* brightly through the clear air. It may not be. It never has been, that picture-postcardy Christmas. But I shall think of you so. *You* think of me in a loin-cloth, brown and wild, in the fair chocolate arms of a Tahitian beauty, reclining beneath a bread-fruit tree, on white sand, with the breakers roaring against the reef a mile out and strange brilliant fish darting through the pellucid hyaline of the sun-saturated sea. . . . Oh, Eddie, it's all true about the South Seas."

This tendency to theatricalize experience, to intensify impressions in the telling, may have been his poet's prerogative. It may also have been an effort toward self-persuasion as to his own peace of mind, more than a desire to awaken envy in his far-off friends.

Still earlier, in a letter from Samoa, he had described to Eddie the lure of life under the palm-trees. . . . "If ever you miss me, suddenly, one day, from Lecture-Room B in King's, or from the Moulin d'Or at lunch, you'll know I've got sick for the full moon on these little thatched roofs, and the palms against the morning, and the Samoan boys and girls diving thirty feet into a green sea or a deep mountain pool under a waterfall—and that I've gone back."

It was to Violet Asquith (who later became Lady Bonham-Carter) that the idle poet diverted the descriptive powers that might have evolved another two columns for his London editor. In writing to that high-spirited Londoner he apologized for the limpness and dirtiness of his epistle, since the loose sheets had been through thunderstorms in the mountains of Fiji and had been pawed by several naked brown babies. He also explained that his immediate neighbors were no longer cannibals.

". . . It's twenty long years since they've eaten anybody, and far more since they've done what I particularly and unreasonably detest, fastened the victim down, cut pieces off him one by one, and cooked and eaten them before his eyes. To witness one's own

transubstantiation into a naked black man—that seems the last indignity. Consideration of the thoughts that pour through the mind of the ever-diminishing remnant of a man, as it sees its last limbs cooking, moves me deeply."

The poet, so arrestingly enmeshed in the primitive and so convinced he had an appreciative audience, could not abstain from dwelling on the comic aspects of cannibalism. And in breaking into rhyme on the subject he still again showed there was an undercrust of humor beneath his melangeur of emotion. This poem, he suggested, could be Number 101 in a modern sonnet sequence.

The limbs that erstwhile charmed your sight
Are now a savage's delight;
The ear that heard your whispered vow
Is one of many *entrees* now;
Broiled are the arms in which you clung
And devilled is the angelic tongue;
And oh, my anguish as I see
A black man gnaw your favorite knee!
Of the two eyes that were your ruin,
One now observes the other stewin'.
My lips—the inconstancy of man—
Are yours no more. The legs that ran
Each dewy morn their love to wake,
Are now a steak, are now a steak!

But that ending of his "sonnet," with its absence of the higher note and the wider outlook, did not satisfy Rupert.

"You may caress details," he explained, "all the main parts of the poem, but at last you have to open the windows and turn to God, or Earth, or Eternity, or any of the Grand Old Endings. It gives Uplift, as we Americans say. And that's so essential. (Did you ever notice how the Browning family's poems all refer suddenly to God in the last line?) It's laughable if you read through them in that way."

Having delivered himself of this muffled shaft against the conventional, he proposed a more satisfying finale.

> O love, O loveliest and best
> Natives this *body* may digest;
> Whole, and still yours, my *soul* shall dwell,
> Uneaten, safe, incoctible!

After that lemon-drop frolic in verse he turns to heavier tools and busies himself in a dithryambic exegesis of life as he was living it in his tropical Eden.

"I shall go out and wander through the forest paths by the grey moonlight," he wrote on to the daughter of England's Prime Minister. "Fiji in moonlight is like nothing else in this world, or the next. It's all dim colours and scents. And here, where it's high up, the most fantastically-shaped mountains in the world tower up all around, and little silver clouds and wisps of mist run bleating up and down the valleys and hillsides, like lambs looking for their mother. . . . It's like living in a Keats world, only it's less syrupy, Endymion without sugar."

The inconstant Rupert, under that spell, could feel that his own England was an unmannerly country of money-making and fogs and gloom. "But how can one know of heaven on earth and not come back to it? I'm afraid I shall slip away from that slithery, murky place you're in now, and return."

In that serial letter to Violet Asquith he goes on to describe the already mentioned mountain chief who had spasmodic yearnings for civilization and who pasted illustrations from the *Sketch* and *Sphere* on the beams of his palm-shaded hut, quite unconscious of the fact he had Viola Tree as "Eurydice" next to the Prince of Wales. Some of the pictures Rupert found not easy to explain to his native audience, since it involved a deeper explanation of his own crazy overseas civilization.

"It's all very perplexing," he continued. "These people, Samoans and Fijians, are so much nicer, and so much better-mannered, than

oneself. They are stronger, beautifuller, kindlier, more hospitable and courteous, greater lovers of beauty, and even wittier, than average Europeans. And they are—under our influence—a dying race. . . . It's impossible to describe how far nearer the Kingdom of Heaven, or the Garden of Eden, these good, naked, laughing people are than oneself or one's friends. . . . But you are an anti-socialist, and I mustn't say a word against our modern industrial system!"

After by the wiles of apophasis registering his protest against that system and inquiring if the butterfly in London was still fluttering from lunch party to lunch party and dance to dance and opera to political platform, he asks if she "won't come and learn how to make a hibiscus-wreath for your hair, and sail a canoe, and swim two minutes under water catching turtles, and dive forty feet into a waterfall, and climb a cocoanut-palm? It's more worth while."

At about the same time and in about the same strain he wrote from Suva to his friend Denis Browne, asking if he was still in the land of the living. . . . "Are you still writing for the *Times?* This is mere heaven. One passes from paradise to paradise. The natives are incredibly beautiful and very kind. Life is one long picnic. I have been living in native villages and roaming from place to place. I know now certainly that it is better to leap by moonlight into a green and silver-cool strange sea, with hibiscus in one's hair and cocoanut-palms nodding majestically above, than to write rotten little poems or to compose bloody little tunes. . . ."

Such was the tenor of his lay. But the repeated note of enthusiasm must have been a little forced. Much as he tried to be satisfied with the South Seas, he was still, at heart, on leash from his homeland. He may have expatiated on the lure of the beachcomber's life but his longing for England was not obliterated. After boasting to Eddie that real life was what one got from the sea-front bars of Frisco and Honolulu and Suva he showed that the older ties still held. . . . "I'm afraid your post as my honorary literary agent, or grass-executor, is something of a sinecure. I can't write

on the trail. I hope to get in enough to select something for *New Numbers* from. I'll slip a poem or two into this or my next letter. . . . I want some *Club* [on his return to London] to take an occasional stranger into for a drink. Where do you think I should go? I thought of asking Raleigh to put me up for the Authors' Club. I don't know what it's like. Or Albert [Rothenstein] might for the Savile. Only ——— is there, which makes it nauseous. I want somewhere I needn't always be spick and span in, somewhere I don't have to pay vast ruin."

Hibiscus wreaths and brown-skinned beauties and moonlight chants were, plainly enough, not holding all his attention. For in another letter from his coral-reefed Eden he plaintively inquires if London is all right, and asks if Wilfrid is as nice as ever, and Eddie as young-looking, and Denis as rococo, and Cathleen as lovely. Then he commands the people at home to think of him, on the opposite side of the earth, and, accordingly and obviously, upside down.

Then, stirred out of his equatorial indolence by thoughts of home, he retired to the tepid rooms of Suva's MacDonald's Hotel and struggled with his long-overlooked articles on Canada.

CHAPTER 15

Dolce Far Niente *and* *Disquiet*

THE Cambridge scholar who had reverted to loin cloths and lotos-eating was voluble enough in his protestations of life's perfection in his new-found Islands of the Blest. But to be overvocal about happiness only too often implies the happiness is thinning out or has already slipped away.

The Fellow of King's could not altogether escape the impression, as time went on, that life amongst his child-minded natives was suspiciously like a sojourn in a nursery. The illiterati of moonlit coral beaches could not be continuously companionable; the brown-skinned and slightly bovine jungle goddesses could not forever seem the final word in physical beauty. Increasing laments came from Rupert that the *dolce-far-niente* spirit of Polynesia was not conducive to the writing on which his heart was set.

But the creative impulse, under the murmuring palms, was not entirely asleep. The artist in words did not completely surrender to somnolence. The poet's too-active brain could not long remain quiescent. He may have lapsed into sun-bathed indolence; but he was determined his hand should not altogether lose its cunning.

He broke into verse, from time to time, some of it desultory and facetious, some of it serious. To show Violet Asquith that the new life had not swallowed him up he enclosed in a letter to her the fragment of an exercise in rhapsody, of which he said there were many pages, though he confessed he couldn't remember the ending.

I know an Island
Where the long scented holy nights pass slow,
And there, 'twixt lowland and highland,
The white stream falls into a pool I know
Deep, hidden with ferns and flowers, soft as dreaming,
Where the brown laughing dancing bathers go. . . .
I know an Island
Where the slow fragrant-breathing night creeps past;
And there, 'twixt lowland and highland,
A deep fern-shrouded murmurous water glimmers;
There I'll come back at last,
And find my friends, the flower-crowned laughing
swimmers.*

From Suva's MacDonald's Hotel on the first day of December, 1913, Rupert sent a long and revealing letter to his friends the Cornfords, warning them it might not get to them until a new year had dawned.

". . . I wander, seeking peace, and ensuing it. Several times I've nearly found it; once, lately, in a Samoan village. But I had to come away from there in a hurry, to catch a boat, and forgot to pack it. But I'll have it yet. . . . I suppose I shall come back some day. England seems to be getting on pretty bloodily without me. . . . Oh, I shall return. The South Seas are Paradise, but I prefer England."

Thoughts of England and his future life there prompted him to recur to the theme of matrimony, already discussed with Jacques Raverat, who seemed to realize his wandering friend's need for anchorage.

"I'd once thought it necessary to marry. . . . But not for me. I'm too old. [He was then twenty-six.] . . . I know what things are good: friendship, and work, and conversation. These I shall have. How one can fill life if one's energetic enough, and knows how to dig! I have thought of a thousand things to do, in books and

* By permission of Sir Edward Marsh.

poems and plays and theatres and societies and housebuilding and dinner-parties, when I get home. . . . Will you join me on the Poets' Round, a walk I've planned? One starts from Charing Cross, in a southeasterly direction, and calls on de la Mere at Anerley; on southwest and finds Davies at Seven Oaks; a day's march to Belloc at King's Head; then up to Wibson [his playful name for Wilfrid Gibson] on the borders of Gloucestershire; back by Stratford and *Rugby* and the Chilterns, where Masefield and Chesterton dwell."

Then with a precision that was almost boyish in its ingenuousness he proceeded to chart his course in life, once he was home again.

"Three months in the year I'm going to live with you and Gwen, three with Dudley and Anne, three with The Ranee [his mother], and three *alone.* A perfect life!"

With his mind, at the moment, on home and old friends, he decorated his letter sheet with a series of ink splashes, which he designated as his Tears of Memory. And in that nostalgic mood he went on to pour out his soul on the value of comradeship.

"There is no man who has had such friends as I, so many, so fine, so various, so multiform, so prone to laughter, so strong in affection, and so permanent, so trustworthy, so courteous, so stern with vices and so blind to faults or folly, of such swiftness of mind and strength of body, so polypist [and here he dropped an olive of humor in his cocktail of emotion by explaining, 'polypist—of many faiths, not bespattered by a parrot, O Greekless ones] and yet benevolent and so apt to make jokes and to understand them. Also their faces are beautiful; and I love them. I repeat a long list of their names, every night before I go to sleep. . . . Even at the moment I feel a hunger, too rending for complete peace, to see all your faces again and to eat food with you. No homesick exile I, though! God, no! I've my time and emotions filled to overflowing with wandering through the strange and savage mountains of this land, or sitting and watching the varied population of the streets, Indians imported for labour cringing by in yellow and pink silks

and muslins, and Fijians swinging along half-naked, with lion faces and heads of hair just like Francis', and the women with a gait like, oh, like no one you've ever seen in your misty, tight-laced, feminist land."

But the exile who claimed not to be homesick forgot the croon of the surf as the future opened up before his mind's eye.

"I've got to have rooms and live in King's for a term or two, or three, perhaps. . . . Oh, I'll make 'em sit up!" he wrote to Jacques Raverat. "I'm going to get up lectures by impossible people, on all subjects outside the Curriculum. Wibson and I are going to lecture on Poetry, W. H. Davies on Fleas, Harry Lauder on whatever he likes, and you and Gwen on Art. I'm going to turn that damned hole into a Place of Education. Oh, and Eddie on Manners. When you go through London see that man. It's eccentric, I admit, to conceal a good heart beneath good manners, but forgivable, surely. And he'd love to see you. He's really *so* nice, and deserves well. I fear lest you children get cut off too far from the world without me to look after you. Farewell, farewell, my dears. *Won't 1914 be fun! Talofa*—with love."

Toward the end of November, before setting out on a seventy-mile expedition through the hills to see more native feasts and dances, he wrote to Eddie, who reported *Georgian Poetry* had gone into its ninth edition and was demanding more poetry from the wanderer. "England expects from you more than a sonnet," Eddie reminded him.

"I've been making inquiries about Tahiti," Rupert told the same Eddie in a letter from Suva. "I discover a predecessor, a painter taking my tour. He passed through Fiji lately and is now heard of in Tahiti. Who but Stephen Haweis! He writes that he has found things of Gauguin in Tahiti. So I'm forestalled by three months. Isn't that sickening? However, I shall go along, and if Stephen Haweis is still there knock him on the head and take the boodle. I hear he's quite a small man!"

He had already written to Violet Asquith announcing that he had had enough of Fiji and that he was about to go down to the

coast to catch a boat for New Zealand and thence to Tahiti, to hunt for lost Gauguins, and then back to barbarism in America.

He also sent off a letter to Cathleen Nesbitt, who had captured London by her acting in Barrie's *Quality Street.*

"I keep now pining after London," he confessed to that distantly adored lady. "I want to talk, talk, talk. Is there anything better in the world than sitting at a table and eating good food and drinking great drink, and discussing everything under the sun with wise and brilliant people?"

Life, he knew, was more than a dinner party. But long weeks of exile in the midst of a primitive people who knew little of either his language or his heart's desire can be accepted as at least partial excuse for that frankly sybaritic ideal of existence.

With his month on Fiji over, the receding vista took on the familiar aura of an Eden entered and lost. Suva, in retrospect, became almost as glamorous as Samoa. When the island-hopper packed his bags and sailed for New Zealand he felt he was leaving sworn and eternal friends behind. He was sorry to say good-by to his favorite native guide, Ambele, a six-foot brown giant, broad-shouldered and more perfectly made than any man or statue he had ever seen, a giant who could carry him across rivers when he was tired of swimming. Rupert even ventured the suggestion of bringing Ambele back to England as a bodyguard and shocking his compatriots by having a black-skinned servant attired only in a loin cloth.

Rupert carried with him to Auckland a letter written earlier by Denis Browne, a letter that added not a little to the traveler's unrest.

For his musician friend back in London claimed it was time for Rupert's return. The exile was being outrun by his rivals. Wilfrid Gibson, Denis warned, had just finished thirty-five poems and in two weeks the number was to be sixty or more. That meant the idler in the South Seas would be swamped—swamped by "Wibson" and all the other poets who were writing so madly and cutting the wanderer out.

Another prod came from the ever-watchful Eddie, who was keeping lines of communication with London editors open.

"I hope you are writing something *objective.* I think each of the poems you have sent home is lovely in itself, but when one looks back at them as a group they are all 'Dear' and 'Love' in them. I long for something to take the place in your new work of *Fish, Dining-Room Tea, Human Shape,* and so-forth. All the same the sonnets are beautiful. There are exquisite things in *Psychical Research,* and I liked the *Cloud* one in *Poetry And Drama* enormously."

Rupert gave a little more time and thought to his versewriting.

"I fire this off as I've finished it," he wrote to Eddie, enclosing a manuscript. ". . . New Zealand's a bit tame by comparison [with Fiji]. How shall I ever stand England? You'll all have to pretend you're very savage, gnaw your food, growling, on the floor, and dance strangely for me by night. And moan rhythmic chants, or else I shall return to the South Seas again."

That down-under country, in what should have been midwinter, perplexed him a little. He found himself in the midst of a summer suggestive of England.

"I eat strawberries, large garden strawberries, every day. . . . It feels curiously unnatural, perverse, like some frightful vice out of Havelock Ellis. I blush and eat secretively."

New Zealand, he went on in his report to Eddie, impressed him as a sort of Fabian England, "very upper-middle-class and gentle and happy—after Canada!—no poor, and the government owning hotels and running charabancs. All the women smoke, and dress very badly, and nobody drinks."

But Rupert was not able to share in the happiness of the New Zealanders. At Auckland the dream weaver went broke. And he found no boat that would take him on to Tahiti without funds.

"Why, precisely, I'm here I don't know," he wrote to Eddie. "I seem to have missed a boat somewhere and can't get on to Tahiti till the beginning of January." Yet, disturbed by news of labor strikes in Dublin, he wrote his mother asking her to contribute

two guineas in his name to the strikers' wives and children, saying he would settle for it when he got back, but requesting that it be done immediately.

Money may have meant little to the wandering poet, but his heart lightened when relief came and he could pay his hotel bills and fare on to Tahiti. It was, he remembered, the island once visited by Lieutenant Bligh of the *Bounty*.

On Tahiti he remained for three months, prolonging his visit from time to time and, chastened into activity, giving more thought to his writing than he was willing to acknowledge. He retreated from Papeete to the smaller town of Maitea, thirty miles distant from the main port, and there, between promenades with the Muse, regaled himself on tropical fruits and sea food and red wine from France.

"I've decided to stay here another month," he wrote to Cathleen, "for two very good reasons—one, that I haven't enough money to get out, two, that I've found the most ideal place in the world to live and work in."

That place, he explained, was a wide veranda over a blue lagoon, with a wooden pier running out into water that was clear and deep for diving. And every woman wore a white flower behind her ear. The manner of its wearing, he pointed out, was significant. If the flower happened to be worn over the right ear it meant the wearer was looking for a sweetheart; one over the left ear meant that the sweetheart had been found; and one over each ear implied the adorned one already had a sweetheart and was looking for another, the latter emblem of impudicity being the favorite headdress of the islands.

"Tonight," he continued, "we will put scarlet flowers in our hair, and sing strange slumbrous South Sea songs to the concertina, and drink red French wine and dance and bathe in a soft lagoon by moonlight, and eat great squelchy tropical fruits, custard-apples, papaia, pomegranate, mango, guava, and the rest. *Urana!* I have a million lovely and exciting things to tell you—but not now."

Rupert was by no means as idle as he wanted the world to

believe. He spent many long hours on the wide veranda overlooking his blue lagoon, toiling with sonnets which he slipped into letters to his "honorary executor" in London and completing the remaining articles on Canada for the *Westminster Gazette.* Where work was concerned, however, there was always the deprecating note.

"I've been shamefully lazy," he told Eddie. "I've half-completed so many things—but nothing finished but these few things."

Among the "few things" dispatched homeward from Maitea were "Heaven," "The Great Lover," the "Psychical Research" sonnet, "Hauntings," "Tiare Tahiti" and "Retrospect," some of his most memorable work. But he still enlarged on his indolence.

"I'm cut off from everything till I can tear myself from Tahiti," he proclaimed. "And that won't be for a long while. It's too fascinating, at first sight. And Gauguin grossly maligned the ladies. Oh, I know all that about expressing their primitive souls by making their bodies squat and square. But it's blasphemy. They're goddesses. He'd have done Venue of Mili thus——"

Interpolated here is a rough drawing of an armless, square-shouldered figure with prodigious breasts and loosely draped thick legs, with a palm tree in the background.

Rupert was, of course, doing more than floating in operatic lagoons and wooing the nymphs of those ambrosial islands. Two weeks later (February 1, 1914) he wrote that he had finished the Canadian articles and was polishing up a number of fair-sized poems.

But the tropic sun exacted its toll. The European who was so impatient to be as brown-tinted as the islanders about him had already lost two skins, peeling like a snake because of repeated sunburns. Epidermic abrasions left him susceptible to germ invasion and abruptly, toward the end of February, he found himself a very sick man.

"I've been ill," he wrote from Papeete to his cousin Erica. "I got some beastly coral-poisoning into my legs, and a local microbe on top of that, and made the places worse by neglecting them and

sea-bathing all day—which turns out to be the worst possible thing. I was in the country when it came on bad, and I tried native remedies, which took all the skin off and produced such a ghastly appearance that I hurried into town. I've been lying on my back for eight or nine days, suffering intensely, while I swab my skinless flesh with boiling disinfectant. However, I've got over it now and have started hobbling about. I think I've been doing too much....

"I have been nursed and waited on by a girl with wonderful eyes and the walk of a goddess and the heart of an angel, who is, luckily, devoted to me. She gives her time to ministering to me, I mine to probing her queer mind. . . . I can't get hold of any money in this damned place. I've written all sorts of people, but they don't seem to respond. I feel pretty certain of getting some from America next week, which means I can get back *there* by the next boat, a month hence. But if I don't I shall send frantic cables all over the world. And so look out for one and scrape up a few pounds, if it does come, and save me to civilization."

He mused, in his enforced idleness, on his event-filled days at home, and exteriorated his nostalgia in a letter to Eddie.

"Flecker—Wilfred—poetry—plays—Moulin Rouge—Hullo Tango! they all stir, these names, some dusty memories away in the back of my consciousness. Somewhere they must have meant something to me, in another life. A vision of taxis slides across the orange and green of the sunset; for a moment the palms dwindle to lamp-posts.... I must come back and see if I can take to it again. Plan out a life for me for next year, Eddie.... But, my dear, I doubt if you'll have me. The Game is Up, Eddie. If I've gained facts through knocking about with Conrad characters in a Gauguin entourage, I've lost a dream or two. I tried to be a poet. And because I'm a clever writer and because I was forty times as sensitive as anybody else, I succeeded a little. *Es is vorüber; es ist unwiederruflich ze Ende.* I am what I came out here to be. Hard, quite, hard. I have become merely a minor character in a Kipling story."

Life, besides hardening him a little, had humbled him a little.

He was accruing confirmation of a conclusion he had once presented to Geoffrey Keynes, to the effect that before the age of twenty-five you pull the world to pieces; after twenty-five the world pulls you to pieces.

But, with a return of health, Rupert's mood of pessimism passed. Once more on his feet, his thoughts of the future became less penumbrous. He returned to his dream of writing a great play, or even managing a theatre and making Cambridge the drama center of England.

"Haven't I, at twenty-six, reached an age when one should begin to learn?" the exile wrote to Keynes. "An energy that has rushed on me with the cessation of my leprous skin-disease, and the approaching end of six months' peace of soul, is driving me furiously on. This afternoon I go fishing in a canoe with a native girl on a green and purple reef. Tonight, from ten to two, spearing fish in the same lagoon by torchlight. Tomorrow at dawn up into the mountains on foot with a Mad Englishman, four natives and a half-caste, to a volcanic lake in the interior."

That his interests were varied, during his last days on Tahiti, is evidenced by his confession that he had spent a morning in Papeete, where eddied all the flotsam of the southern oceans, in learning about Sapphism from a stray Jewish chorus girl. The afternoon of the same day was enriched by absorbing from a drunken beachcomber the information that Gauguin had ended his life suffering from syphilis and elephantiasis.

"Learning, learning, learning," he exclaimed in his letter to Eddie. ". . . I'm afraid I shan't be able to settle down at home. But it'll be an advantage that I can come to England through America. For then I'll find it so lovely that I won't be hungering after sunlight and brown people and rainbow-coloured fish."

CHAPTER 16

On the Long Trek Back

EARLY in April 1914 Rupert sailed from Tahiti for San Francisco. The thought of beating homeward lightened his heart, but the memory of the laughing and brown-skinned friends he was leaving behind saddened his spirits as the waving quay crowds and the red roofs and the cloud-misted hills melted away.

An echo of that feeling is in a letter he wrote to his cousin Erica.

". . . I resigned myself to the vessel and watched the green shores and rocky peaks fade, with hardly a pang. I had told so many of those that loved me, so often, 'Oh, yes, I'll come back—next year, perhaps, or the year after'—that I suppose I'd begun to believe it myself. It was only yesterday, when I knew that the Southern Cross had left me, that I suddenly realized I had left behind those lovely places and lovely people."

As he leaned on the rail of the *Tahiti,* looking back at the ship's wake, he wondered if he would ever return. Would moonlight on a Samoan beach work its spell, like that mystic flower in the far Andes—the flower which, once smelled by a man, lures him back from the ends of the earth? But, once north of the equator again, he found himself whispering scraps of English poetry and thinking English thoughts.

". . . I've been away long enough," he continued. "I'm older than I was. I've left bits of me about—some of my hair in Canada, and one skin in Honolulu, and another in Fiji, and a bit of my third in Tahiti, and a half a tooth in Samoa, and bit of my heart all over the place. I'm deader that I was. *Partir, c'est toujours mourir en peu!*"

Yet the poignant thought that one dies a little when one goes

away did not long depress his volatile spirit. On board he found new friends with whom to argue and had listless hours of leisure when he could brood over his incubating poems, poems which he lost no time in dispatching eastward once he had landed at San Francisco. A blither note shows itself in a letter he wrote in the mid-Pacific, to the comradely Helena (Helen Verrall) in Cambridge.

"... Some day this will get to 'Frisco, and then hurry across to New York, and catch the *Lusitania,* fetch up in Southampton, win through to London, achieve Cambridge, and finally flutter into your eager hands, half the world away."

He conjectures it may be on May Day, remembering the English tradition that maidens who wash their face in dew on that morning are promptly made beautiful.

"But you won't have gone dabbling in the dew, in Justin's car, at Overcote. No, indeed; you young folks don't do these things.

"It'll be good to get back to theatres and supper-parties and arguments and hedges and roast beef and beer and misty-half colours. But Oh, sometimes, I warn you, I'll be having Samoan or Tahitian thoughts! When everything's *too* grey, and there's an amber fog that bites your throat, and everyone's irritable and in a high state of nerves, and the pavement's greasy, and London is full of 'Miles of shopping women, served by men,' and another Jew has bought a peerage, and I've a cold in my nose, and the ways are full of lean and vicious people, dirty hermaphrodites and eunuchs [he here mentions a certain scolastic *bête noir*], moral vagabonds, pitiable scum—why, then I shall have a *Sudseegedenki,* a thought of 20° South, a Samoan thought. And in my heart there will be a dawn of incredible scarlet, and a sunset of such gold and green and purple as you do not know in England, and a lagoon shot through with every colour under the Southern sun, and a perpetual wind, a Trade Wind, blowing coolness against the shore. And the kind and lovely brown people with flowers in their hair will come and say 'We're going out fishing on the reef; come along.' And I'll wind my *pareo* tighter round my middle and go

and pull out the canoes and we'll all jump in, with our torches and spears, and go swinging and singing out over the parks and palaces of coral and the gaudy fish, and Marai and Pepe will wail a most untranslatable song. . . . And I shall jump up and curse and go to the *Cheshire Cheese* and read Dr. Johnson and Jane Austen and Milton and whatever is most English, and eat porterhouse steak and drink a great deal of ale, and so get drunk, and, I hope, forget."

Being in a foreign country, he had once asserted, gave one a feeling of irresponsibility. It was like standing in the wings after one had done one's scene and watching other performers doing theirs, with those other persons' lives in the center of things instead of one's own. That looking in from the outside had its dangers. It could show up unrealized weaknesses in the performance.

So, having repeated his rhapsody on the lure of South Seas life, Rupert advised his Cambridge friend never to go beyond civilization. It was, he contended, too unsettling.

"Inside civilization, one can realize the beastliness of it and labour, if one's honest, as I hope you'll be, to smash it. But when you get outside you realize the advantages of not being in it *too* acutely. My dear, to return to England, where the presence of people I love obscures the bloodiness of the state of affairs, I have to cross—oh, how can I say it?—America. Land of Individualism, of Plutocracy, of Ugliness. . . . And I shall live to see the total prohibition of alcohol in England, which is the female idea of politics, and the establishment of Christian Science as a State Church, which is the female idea of religion."

The intransigent Rupert, having disposed of the established order of things and having eased his soul of a few of his antipathies, proceeded limpingly to the promenade deck and joined a dusky little French fellow voyager in inventing bilingual insults to deficiently attractive female passengers who stared after him and wondered why so handsome a misogynist should remain so aloof under so seductive a moon. But the poet who was passing from

one world to another was busy with his memories, and with his hopes.

When he landed at San Francisco he found letters awaiting him. One, from his mother, brought him the news that he was sixteen guineas the richer for his October articles in the *Westminster Gazette,* a disappointingly meager rate of remuneration of four guineas an installment, which he regarded as "pretty bloody." But he was cheered by a parcel of books from Eddie, to whom he at once sent off a bundle of new poems. He was glad to renew his friendship with Professor Wells and Professor Gayley at Berkeley and loiter about the city where he was still remembered. But the demand of civilization that he must again wear clothes was a thorn in the flesh.

"Oh God! Oh God!" he wrote to his 'grass-agent' in London. "How I hate civilization and houses and trams and collars! I've found good friends who live in the quieter parts of this region, who live in a garden filled with roses and hyacinths and morning-glory. So I'll rest a day or two and try to get over the effects of my first re-entry into civilization. And then I'll sneak away East, and come home. I want to live in a hut by a river and pretend I'm Polynesian."

He had always nursed the vague hope of being a war correspondent. When he learned in San Francisco that trouble was brewing in Mexico he hesitated about striking south of the Rio Grande. But, deciding it was not to be much of a war, he went on to Arizona, reading the English classics as he went, to get the South Seas out of his blood, as he expressed it, and to fix in his mind the fact that one must wear trousers again.

While stopping to survey the Grand Canyon he wrote to the Lady of the Chateau, whose letter to him had been thrust into his berth en route. The letter, in his eagerness, he read with the help of lighted matches.

"I'm going on to Chicago tomorrow," he wrote the widowed *comtesse* whom he at the moment hoped to meet in Washington.

"I stay there perhaps six days and then one day in Pittsburgh, then *Washington*. . . . I shall reach Washington dishevelled, dirty, tired, bad-tempered, and in rags. I'm so tired of doing things for myself. I've done it for eleven months. I shall require you to tell me what to buy and where to buy it, and how much to eat, and when to go to bed, and where to stay, and what to see, and what to say, and when to brush my hair and wash my hands. It will be heavenly seeing you. I'm not going to write any news now. I'm going to put on my overcoat and sit in the snow and look at the Grand Canyon. It is very large and untidy, like my soul. But, unlike my soul, it has peace in it."

From Arizona he wrote in much the same strain to Cathleen, enlarging on the need of once more getting adjusted to the demands of civilization.

"It's eleven months since I've not been looked after, and my clothes are in an awful state, and my hair not cut, and I rarely shave. I'm so tired of it. . . . I shall (prepare your ears and hold tight) sail from New York on June 6th and by June 15th I shall be in London!"

Then, with childlike eagerness, he implores Cathleen to keep the date of his arrival a secret from their friends.

"It's my fancy to blow in on them unexpected, just to wander into Raymond Buildings and hear Eddie squeak 'Oh, my dear, I thought you were in Tahiti.' It's awfully silly and romantic, but the thought does give me the keenest and most exquisite pleasure. Don't give away one of the first poets in England. But there is in him still a very small portion that's just a little childish."

CHAPTER 17

An Interlude in Illinois

RUPERT's stay in Chicago, which he had hoped would be a brief one since (as he expressed it) he feared it "would be Hell," was both an unexpectedly prolonged one and an unexpectedly pleasant one.

This was due, not because his sun-tanned body felt at home in the Auditorium Hotel there, but to the fact that he found himself suddenly in touch with a group of congenial spirits whose interests were parallel to his own.

He had always loved the theatre and nursed a hankering for a better knowledge of stagecraft. It was his intention, as Duncan Campbell Scott reported, to devote his coming years to playwriting. And he already had his one-act *Lithuania* awaiting production.

So, armed with a message of introduction from Harold Monro, he lost no time in presenting himself to Maurice Browne, who was inaugurating the little-theatre movement in America and was making stage history by the brilliance with which he was piloting the newly formed Chicago Little Theatre into prominence.

Chicago, in that era, was not the stockaded American outpost many Europeans regarded it. It was, in fact, basking in the light of a distinct literary movement, a movement that included such names as Robert Herrick and Robert Morss Lovett and Harry Hansen and Jerome Blum. Margaret Anderson was opening her pages of *The Little Review* to the early work of Sherwood Anderson and was later to achieve a *succès d'estime* by being the first to publish (in part) Joyce's *Ulysses* in America, since for that venture she was haled to court. The energetic Harriet Monroe was piloting

the magazine *Poetry** into unexpectedly vigorous life and proving to the world that not every Chicago intellectual need migrate to New York.

There were others in that awakening of the Midwest. Among them were George Ade and George Barr McCutcheon and his cartoonist brother John. Among others who were making that vital hinterland more vocal must be counted Carl Sandburg and Eunice Tietjens and Percy Hammond. And not to be overlooked was the expatriate Maurice Browne, who was to enrich the stage life of his adopted country and somewhat change the course of theatrical history.

Maurice Browne is a remarkable man. Though he had been born on the banks of the Thames at Reading and educated in England, the bulk of his earlier stage work was done in America. There he was a pioneer in believing in and promoting the amateur actor, whom he contended to be more pliable than the run-of-the-mill professional and with whom he could function freed from the strangling coils of a too-commercialized syndicate. His ardent little group, operating in the Fine Arts Building in Chicago, made up what Henry L. Mencken called the first and best little theatre in America. In it the then youthful Ben Hecht was experimenting and an equally young Charles McArthur was trying out his wings.

For three active years this group had its ponderable number of artistic triumphs. But the enterprise was never a lucrative one. Its leader and his wife were allotted eight dollars a week for their work. Necessity more than choice prompted them to move on to other scenes and other successes. Maurice Browne later in New York directed Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis* for Margaret Anglin, courageously undertook Sherriff's *Journey's End* in London when no other producer would consider it, essayed *Hamlet* at the Old Vic, and followed it with a production of *Othello* in which he

* In the Harriet Monroe Modern Poetry Collection at the University of Chicago is an envelope from the office of *Poetry* addressed to Rupert Brooke. This envelope, which originally contained a check in payment for a Brooke poem, came back from the war front with the official notation "DECEASED."

took the role of Iago while Paul Robeson assumed that of the Moor. Still later, in England, he acted the part of the Soldier in *The Unknown Soldier* and co-authored with Robert Nichols the very successful *Wings Over Europe.*

But Maurice Browne was more than an actor and producer. He was also a poet and a long-range member of the Georgian group. For two years he and Rupert Brooke had been chasing each other across two continents without meeting. So when in April 1914 he came down to the Little Theatre in the Fine Arts Building and there found a scribbled note from his fellow poet he promptly got in touch with Rupert and took the wanderer under his wing.

This adoption of the young Englishman "with the honey-colored hair" was followed by two happy weeks of theatre-going and shoptalk and poetry reading and beer-drinking and arguments over aesthetics. In those talks, Ellen Van Volkenburg observed, the loquacious Rupert would often let his tongue run away with him, then suddenly lapse into silence, as though his traditional public-school abhorrence of showing emotion were eclipsing his passing enthusiasms. The curtain would be abruptly drawn and a Yeatslike sense of withdrawal would give the impression of a startled soul retreating into its shell.

But another day always brought up another discussion. Rupert, who remained nominally booked at the overstately Auditorium, spent most of his time at the Browne studio, where he breakfasted regularly and volubly with the young English director and his wife, the aforementioned Ellen Van Volkenburg, who was later to play the part of the Daughter in a production of *Lithuania.* Rupert also visited the Little Theatre, where Mme. Borgny Hammer was then enacting *Hedda Gabler.*

Some of those studio talks lasted all night. On one occasion the group was joined by Arthur Davison Ficke, the Iowa poet, who hurried over from Davenport to participate in an evening of "poetry, beer, and Brooke," an evening that prolonged itself until the sun came up. For there were vast arguments as to free verse and rhyme structure and folk songs and sonnetwriting, with

copious quotations to bolster up first one side and then another.

To that assembled and sympathetic group Rupert read most of his poems, flushing with pleasure when some member remarked on the loveliness of an occasional passage. And when the chance presented itself he read to them his play *Lithuania.* That one-act tragedy so impressed Maurice Browne that he promptly agreed to produce it in his Little Theatre.

It was a macabre drama the silent circle listened to, the story of the home-coming of a young Lithuanian who had early left his poverty-stricken parents and out in the world had acquired wealth. When he comes back to them, with every sign of affluence, he is not recognized by his old mother and father. He gloats over the anticipated joy of revealing who he is and of sharing his riches with his famine-stricken family. But that joyful parade of wealth is too much for the destitute peasants. Desperate through hunger, they decide to do away with him. While the father at a neighboring grogshop is keying himself up for the murder, the deformed and ill-conditioned sister smashes in the head of the stranger with an axe, with her mother beside her as a candle bearer. When they proceed to denude the body the aged parents discover it is their own son who has been murdered.

Rupert's reading of that tour de force of dramatic irony had a touch of the histrionic which he did not allow to invade his reading of poetry. With his verse, his listeners found, he was not elocutionary. There, as a rule, his manner was quiet and almost shy, with the poet sprawled indifferently out on a floor rug or lounging against a piece of furniture, his hand pushed from time to time through his mop of sun-bleached hair and his eyes always alight. He read as the creative artist is apt to read, abjuring the actor's tone variations and more intent on emphasizing the factor of rhythm and the sonority of a full-voweled sentence. But it was good reading, the sort of reading of lyric poetry to be expected of a lyric poet.

One member of that informal group was Eugene Hutchinson, the well-known photographer of celebrities, at that time with a

studio in the same Fine Arts Building. A quiet study of the young Englishman with the brooding blue eyes and the crown of bleached gold and the sun-browned skin that was beginning to win back a little of its earlier pink and white persuaded the captor of arresting faces that he must have a portrait of the author of *Lithuania.*

Rupert agreed to go to the near-by studio and be photographed. The result of that encounter can best be told in the words of the portraitist himself.

"I knew, of course, who Rupert Brooke was. But on that occasion I was more impressed by his personality than by his poetry. For I had found myself confronted by an unbelievably beautiful young man. There was nothing effeminate about that beauty. He was man-size and masculine, from his rough tweeds to his thick-soled English boots. He gave me the impression of being water-loving and well-washed. Perhaps this was due to the freshness of his sun-tanned face and the odd smoothness of his skin, a smoothness you see more in women than in men. He struck me as of the Nordic type, with his blue eyes and his mop of almost copper-colored hair with its glints of gold. He seemed like a Norse myth in modern clothes. Yet there was no vanity in the man. He submitted to my manipulations without protest, though he broke into a laugh when with my own hands I removed his neck-tie and opened up the throat of his soft-collared shirt.

"This resulted in the somewhat Byronic portrait of the poet which was used as the frontispiece of the John Lane volume and has often been reproduced. And an echo of that, nine years later, came to me in my Chicago studio, when an utter stranger walked in and asked if I was Eugene Hutchinson. When I acknowledged that I was he said: 'My name is Thomas Skeyhill. I'm an Australian. But years ago I decided that if ever I got to Chicago I'd look you up. For I was a nurse in the British Army and during the time of the Gallipoli adventure I was serving in the Eastern Mediterranean. And there *Rupert Brooke died in my arms.* So what I want to tell you is this: much as I loved his work, I've the feeling you contributed as much to his popularity as did his verse.

By that I mean you visualized for all the world just what people hoped a poet would look like. And I've always wanted to tell you so.'

"But I recall another episode about my Brooke portrait. On the same day I photographed the English poet I also photographed a central Illinois musician who answered to the name of Mrs. Funk. The prints of each were mounted and packed for shipping, one lot to Mrs. Funk in Bloomington and one lot to Brooke, then at the Hotel McAlpin in New York. Unfortunately my assistant switched the labels, with the result that the Funk portraits went to Brooke and the Brooke pictures went to Mrs. Funk. I was in total ignorance of this until a letter came from the lady in Bloomington saying that while she would like to keep the photographs of the lovely poet her own were of more immediate value to her and would I kindly correct the mistake. A few days later I received a letter from Brooke which read as follows:

Dear Mr. Hutchinson:

The modern photographer seems to an old-fashioned person like myself to retouch almost *too* much. Or perhaps you only like the soul? While the soul of a person who writes verse is said to be hermaphroditic, it is not, I protest, *so* feminine. . . . Poor lady, she is on her way back to you.

Yours sincerely,

RUPERT BROOKE

That facetious reference to hermaphroditism in the artist brought to Mr. Hutchinson's mind yet another memory of his encounter with the author of "Grantchester."

"That Fine Arts Building group of ours was a singularly garrulous one. On this occasion a number of us had forgathered on the empty stage of the Little Theatre and were deep in a discussion of the artistic temperament and the recurrence of feminine attributes in the male artist. Rupert Brooke was one of the group that day, sitting up with his back to a stage-prop column and sitting

there quite silent as the wordy war went on. It wasn't until we had finished that he spoke. Then he startled us by the vigor and decision with which he stated that, notwithstanding Havelock Ellis and Krafft-Ebing, this mixture of the sexes was all wrong, that male was male and female was female and any intermingling of the two was morbid and calamitous. In other words, this Shelleylike youth with his hypersensitive face and his girlish smoothness of skin and his emotional blue eyes was trying to tell us that manliness in men was the one hope of the world."

The homeward-bound exile had brought back from the South Seas more than a pack of memories. He also brought back a childlike collection of bright-tinted sea shells, which he proudly though grudgingly doled out to people he cared for. Nor must be overlooked a number of glass doors, reputed to have been painted by Gauguin. How authentic they were was never established, for through some mishap in transit they failed to reach England.

Perhaps his most treasured acquisition was a huge, broad-brimmed, high-crowned hat, native-woven from Polynesian dried grass. This he insisted on wearing, until the discomfiture of the Brownes persuaded him it might be more politic merely to carry it in his hand. The concession did not add to his hosts' happiness. To walk through the streets bareheaded, in that era, was not as common as now, though the poet remained dreamily oblivious of the blinking Chicagoans who turned to stare after that oddly festooned and radiant figure who seemed of another world. Some of the women even altered their course and followed him to his hotel door.

But the holiday had to end. Rupert was anxious to press on to Washington, for quite personal reasons, and was equally anxious for a hurried study of Pittsburgh and Gary before sailing for England. Neither visit proved a satisfactory one. In writing from Pittsburgh he began his epistle "This is a letter from *Hell!*" And his meeting with the Lady of the Chateau, for some reason, has remained a closed book.

Before leaving Chicago, however, he learned that Maurice

Browne and Ellen Van Volkenburg were sailing for England on May 29. He had promised Edward Marsh to embark three weeks earlier. And much as he relished the thought of a voyage with such engaging companions he had to tell them that their trails were parting.

Rupert had had a dream, a dream from which he woke up both laughing and crying. He had dreamed he was already back in England, meeting old friends and viewing familiar scenes still warm in his memory. It was all so vivid and enrapturing that he felt he must be on his way at once. He was impatient to see Drake's Plymouth and Dartmouth and Torquay, to find his train carrying him through Islington and past Dawlish where Keats once sang, and on to Ottery St. Mary where Coleridge once lived. The sooner he could look on English faces and English fields the better.

But the dreamer, like many another sun-treader, was in the habit of losing things. And on this occasion he lost his luggage. Through some mistake in checking, his motley array of bags and trunks had gone hopelessly astray. It was only after several anxious days of effort that the misdirected luggage was recovered.

The delay meant a revision of plans. After frantic visits to steamship offices he was able to announce to the Brownes that he had booked a second passage and would sail with them on the *Philadelphia* at the end of the month. While awaiting his sailing date he escaped from New York and with a middle-aged but athletic American lawyer embarked on a canoe trip down the Delaware River, sleeping out in the open and watching the stars and the fireflies and falling asleep to the lullaby of countless frogs. It was worth the sunburn, he concluded, that blistered his forearms and the hours of paddling that left his muscles sore for a week.

His spirits were as high as his color when he hurried back to New York to board the *Philadelphia.* There a happy reunion with his Chicago friends took place, though the somewhat startled Brownes saw that Rupert was still wearing his outlandish South

Seas hat. And it was a happy voyage, with the three expatriates knowing they were facing their island home. The South Seas hat even became endurable when it was discovered the passenger list included a solemn Indian chief who stalked about the deck with a band of beads and three tall feathers adorning his stately head.

Rupert, for once, was not seasick, though he startled his dinner companions by eating extra helpings of ice cream generously mixed with sugar and stewed rhubarb. His spirits, on this historic trip, were irrepressible. He was going home. He bubbled with plans for the future. He decided it was time for an English theatre to be established in Berlin, convinced that Cathleeen Nesbitt would swing in with his scheme. His faith in that enterprise was so great and his explanations of its possibilities so persuasive that he even won over the Brownes. The war, which was so much nearer than they dreamed, put an end to the plan.

His diablerie aboard the *Philadelphia* took many forms. He sunned himself in the open and made faces at the fluttering women who tried to snapshot him; he drank beer mixed with lemonade; he demanded of his table steward pineapple fritters combined with queen's cake and did his best to confirm the tradition that all poets are crazy. Those high spirits, in fact, shocked a number of his fellow passengers, notably two melancholy men of the cloth, who failed to approve of so much declamation of impromptu (and sometimes ribald) verses, of so much mysterious laughter, and of so much storytelling.

One of his stories had to do with Henry James. That abstracted author, emerging from a Bond Street bookshop, bumped into a dowager as she was about to step into her victoria. The author of *The Golden Bowl* at once attempted to apologize for the collision, mounting to the step of the carriage as he did his best to make his meaning clear and his excuses explicit. He was so anxious to achieve an exact expression of his feelings that, still talking, he clung to the carriage door as the vehicle joined the Bond Street traffic. It was not until they reached the Marble Arch that he felt

persuaded he had fittingly phrased the required explanation of his awkwardness, whereupon he restored his hat to his head, descended to terra firma, and pursued his way convinced no injury had at least been done to his literary integrity.

The voyage was an interregnum of carefree frivolity, clouded only by news of the calamitous sinking of the *Empress of Ireland* in the St. Lawrence. But it was lightened again by a marconigram from Edward Marsh saying he had reserved seats for the Russian Ballet and asking the three travelers to dine with him and Cathleen on the night of their arrival in London.

The *Philadelphia* docked at Plymouth early on the morning of June 6. Rupert, leaning on the rail, watched the dawning shores of his beloved homeland. Sniffing ecstatically, he declared he could catch the smell of new-mown hay. That odor, wafted across the pale harbor water, brought tears to his eyes. A few minutes later, when the ship was being warped in to her pier, the man who was born at Rugby and the man who was born at Reading broke into a schoolboy dance of happiness on the deck, a dance in which they were joined by Ronald Hargreave, a rhymewriting young painter who during the voyage had converted the frolicsome trio into a foursome.

Rupert lost no time in entraining for London and Rugby and his anxiously waiting mother. As he rumbled eastward through the green hills and the brown haunted moor and the small fields with their ancient hedges, and passed humble cottages and sedate homes of red brick shadowed by lordly elms and oaks and beeches, and saw once more the walled meadows and the friendly copses and the gardens heavy with flowers, he nursed a feeling that the earth of England held for him a quality and a holiness as precious as a friend's honor.

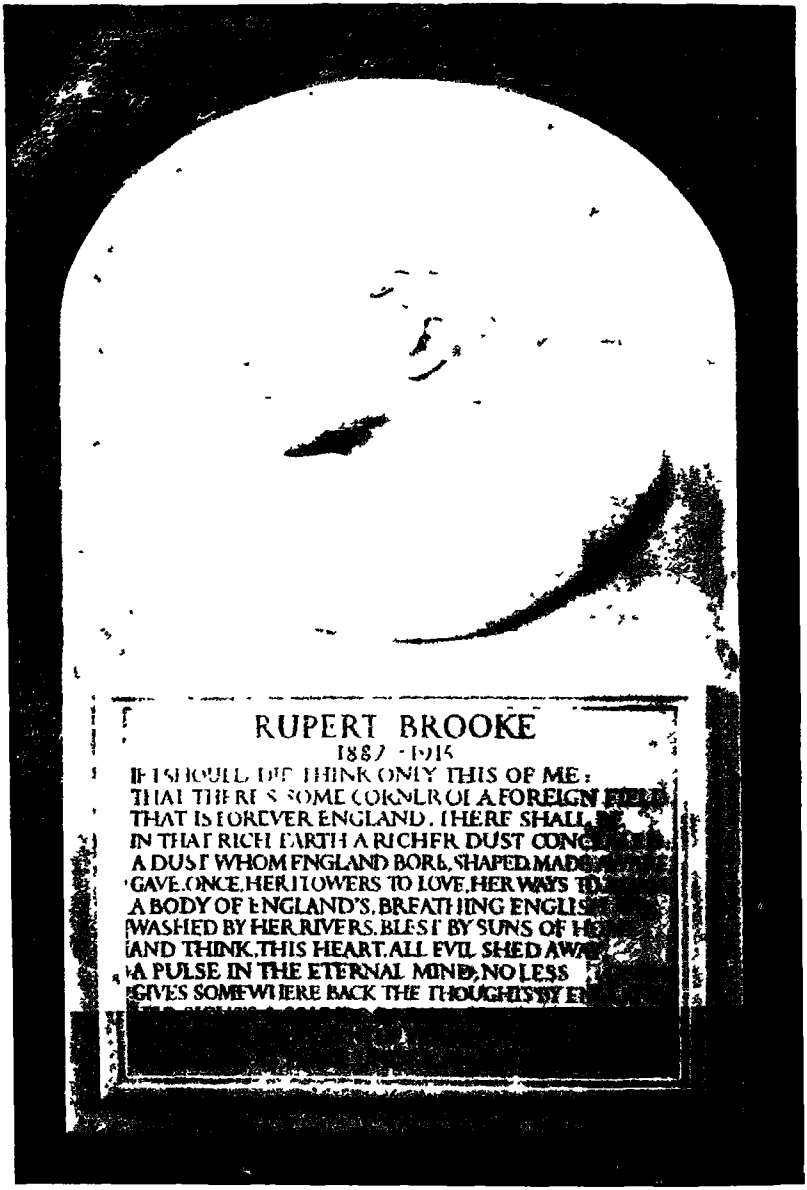
At London, when he found the faithful Eddie and the friendly Denis Browne and the idolized Cathleen were there to meet him, he wept again. But their meeting was brief. He hurried on to Rugby, to find himself in the arms of the mother who loved this wandering son of hers more than she could ever understand him.



The poet's grave after his midnight burial on Skyros



The gravestone of Pentelic marble, erected in 1920, which now marks the resting place of the poet



The Memorial Tablet in Rugby Chapel.

But any remoteness he detected in her did not detract from his dazed happiness at being home again. Those first two nights in England, he confessed, he scarcely slept at all. Three days later he hurried back to London, for the regal party that Eddie was arranging to celebrate the home-coming of a travel-worn Ulysses.

CHAPTER 18

Sunny Days and Darkening Clouds

EDWARD MARSH, the ever-generous friend and patron of young poets, felt Rupert's welcome home should be a royal one. He laid his plans accordingly, though the guest of honor facetiously cautioned his host not to hire the Guildhall for the occasion.

The round of festivities began with a Lucullan dinner party where the happy poet sat between an equally happy Eddie and Cathleen, with Ellen Van Volkenburg and Maurice Browne to complete the circle. Rupert, at his best that night, held his friends spellbound by the wit and radiance of his speech, pouring out anecdotes and felicitously phrased memories of his adventures and misadventures on the other side of the world. He felt once more in the midst of his own kind.

With dinner over the lighthearted group hurried on to the Russian Ballet, where the returned traveler could feast his eyes on his favorite *Petrouchka* and *Les Papillons.* His joy was intensified by the impression that he was back at the center of things, for in the audience as he looked about him his gaze could rest on Queen Alexandra and wander on to such notables as George Moore and Arnold Bennett and George Bernard Shaw, all under one roof. London, he felt, was the heart of the world.

After the ballet the happy group flocked back to Eddie's rooms in Gray's Inn, where they were soon joined by luminaries of the stage and the world of letters. There were Basil Dean, then at the height of his career, and the equally popular Henry Ainley. There were Granville-Barker and his wife, Lillah McCarthy. The former had created the part of the poet in Shaw's *Candida,* and the latter,

with equal success, had essayed the role of Ann Whitefield in Shaw's *Man and Superman,* so that Shaw and Barker and McCarthy were proving a combination that seemed to be breathing new life into the English theatre. Literature was represented by such figures as John Drinkwater and Harold Monro and Wilfrid Gibson, all good friends of the guest of honor.

It was a gathering that did not break up until morning. And it was obviously too merry a party to be called a feast of reason. One of its memorable features was Rupert's determination, as dawn was breaking through the soot-darkened trees of Gray's Inn, to demonstrate the intricacies of certain South Sea dances.

If there were clouds gathering on the horizon, unofficial London in that sun-bathed June of 1914 gave little thought to them. The anxious conferences that took place behind the doors of 10 Downing Street were still a closed book to the pleasure-seeking city intent on observing its traditional season. There was little Ides-of-March apprehension in either the dowagers of Mayfair or the dancers in the night clubs that seemed to be turning London into a metropolis of merrymakers. There was no ghost of the Duchess of Richmond to warn them of the cannon's opening roar. June had almost drawn to a close when in far-off Sarajevo a Serb student named Gavrillo Princip lighted the fuse that was to set the world on fire.

Rupert, during the six crowded weeks that followed his homecoming, exacted all he could from life. His days were a phantasmagoria of luncheons and dinners with loquacious friends, of music and ballet and theatregoing, of voluble meetings at the Poetry Bookshop where the intellectuals and the near intellectuals of London then had the habit of forgathering. The city, however, did not entirely usurp his time and attention.

There was one happy and carefree day when he and Eddie escaped to the country and went tramping through the Chiltern Hills, loitering along the wooded valleys to Wendover and discussing poets and poetry as they went. They picked flowers and talked to villagers and dozed in the heather and at nightfall rested

in an inn where they dined on roast beef and drank much beer and agreed it had been a memorable day.

From city diversions Rupert was also glad now and then to dodge back to Rugby and borrow his mother's motorcar for a sudden dash to some neighboring shire or a visit to Birmingham to inspect John Drinkwater's newly equipped repertory theatre that was already making stage history. There were teas and talks with Violet Asquith and more intimate teas and talks with Cathleen, who so saddened him with the news she was considering a two-year theatrical tour of America that Rupert informed Eddie it was "perfectly bloody" and he didn't know just what to do. For of all people in London he wanted to be with Cathleen, the responsive and understanding Cathleen who believed in his genius and made allowance for his moods and was able to treat him "not as he deserved but as he desired."

Though they were now profoundly in love and Rupert more than once talked of marriage, there were certain reservations on the part of the otherwise impulsive Irish girl who found London at her feet. Loverlike, she wanted Rupert all for herself. But she was not blind to his variability, to the threat of impermanence in his attachments. Perhaps that made the passing days with him more precious. But love was blind enough, eventually, to leave her hesitating on the threshold of matrimony, even with a mad young poet. A compact for their union was entered into, was put off, and was renewed. Before that final step was taken the clouds of war rolled between them.

Rupert, with no thought of those clouds, seemed intent on drinking life to the full. He saw all he could of Cathleen and continued to lose himself in a carnival spirit that took on, at times, the aspects of an escape from inner unrest, the inner unrest from which he could never for long remain free. There were picnics in the country and a week-end visit with John Masefield, who, preceding an earlier visit, had sent his fellow poet an elaborately drawn map to guide his guest along the devious way from Great Missenden Station to the secluded Masefield home in Great Hampden. There

was a projected trip to Cornwall for a week of sailing, and plans for a walking tour in France or Italy with Jacques Raverat. There was, as well, a two-day sojourn with Wilfrid Gibson in his humble Gloucestershire abode and a later and longer visit with the ever-hospitable Cornfords in Norfolk.

When he went to a Promenade Symphony Concert at Queen's Hall with Reginald Pole, with whom he once shared ambitious plans for evolving a new form of poetic drama, the earlier visitor to the South Seas suggested to the later visitor that Tahiti would be a good place to write about. Rupert explained that others had told him the same thing, but every time he sat down and tried to write about that lost Eden the tears blinded his eyes and he had to abandon the effort.

He preferred to forget the past, that summer, and give himself up to the distractions of London. There was Soho to be explored, and dinners at Simpson's, and an art show at Grosvenor House, and plays to be seen, and midnight sessions in Marsh's Gray's Inn rooms where the fiery-souled Wilfrid Gibson and Harold Monro and Lascelles Abercrombie discussed poetry and argued over metaphysics until their office-wearied and war-harried host was prompted to slip off to bed and leave the wordy disputants to fight it out in their own arbitrary way.

As a rule it was Abercrombie, small, dark, and bespectacled, who, with his scholarly mastery of intellectual abstractions, seemed to get the best of the argument. But dawn would break, sometimes, before those Socratic disputes had ended.

Rupert, by this time, had lost much of his earlier shyness and was eager to take part in any such mental duel. His life abroad had hardened him a little, had shaken some of the romanticism out of him. He may not have brought back with him from the South Seas the threatened two black-skinned natives. But he did bring back a less insular mind and a more communal philosophy of life. He was more anxious to know his own kind, to meet the great and the near-great, to get into the stream of life.

Yet he refused to part with an individualism that was always

his. When Eddie saw to it that he received an invitation to the Prime Minister's garden party the returned traveler decided to make his appearance there in his huge Polynesian grass hat, happy at the thought that Cathleen and Denis Browne were to accompany him on that adventure amid the stately ladies and the solemn administrators of the British Empire.

For once Rupert the defiant was filled with confusion. On approaching the marquee-stippled grounds and the inevitable top hats and the resplendent gowns and uniforms he realized the gathering was too dismayingly formal and official for any parade of his South Seas sombrero. He turned on his heel and fled. Later in the day Cathleen and Denis found him in a dim corner of Charing Cross Station, gloomily eating strawberries.

But he was soon to be confronted by more substantial reasons for gloom. The *carpe-diem* life of London was coming to a close. The clouds that had been low on the horizon were growing darker and bigger. The rumors of war became more open and insistent. Rupert, from a brief retreat in the country, wrote and asked Eddie, whom he knew to be at the center of things, if one was right or wrong in nursing a Brussels-before-Waterloo feeling at such a time. "I'm so uneasy.... All the vague perils—the world seems so dark—and I'm vaguely frightened. I feel hurt to think that France may suffer. And it hurts, too, to think that Germany may be harmed by Russia. And I'm anxious that England may act rightly. I can't bear it if she does wrong."

Through all that squirrel-cage period of social distractions, the heart of the poet was not really at rest. He saw peril hanging over the England he loved, both at home and abroad. Through the dance music ghostly guns began to echo. Through all the teas and dining out, the visits and excursions, his almost hectic sociability became a forlorn effort to escape some inner gloom.

And while he waited and hoped and doubted and worried the storm broke.

It so happened that he was in a London music hall, where Ce-

cilia Loftus was convulsing the audience by giving her imitations of Frank Tinney and Elsie Janis, when the program was abruptly interrupted. The cinema projector came alive. A none-too-flattering picture of the Kaiser was thrown on the screen and the silence was broken by a few hisses. On the same screen, a moment later, a hastily scribbled message was flashed. It read: WAR DECLARED WITH AUSTRIA 11—9

Der Tag had come.

The stunned audience filed out into Trafalgar Square, where the midnight war editions were already on the street. Rupert, watching the crowds, saw such tragedy and dignity in the faces of his compatriots that he was moved to tears.

His first feeling was one of bewilderment. He still failed to realize that he would be called into the fighting forces. But, in that great emergency, he had a correspondingly great hunger to serve. He thought, at first, of crossing the Channel and helping the French get in their crops. In the country that had once been his playground women and children were toiling in the fields, the palsied hands of old men were binding wheat into sheaves. The cobbled streets of towns he had once traversed were silent and empty; the inns where he had once been happy were silent and deserted. The manhood of France had rallied to the call and had marched away in their foolish red trousers that were to be such good targets for German musketry.

But Liége had fallen and more than French blood had flowed at Mons and the army of the Kaiser was sweeping on toward Paris. It was too late to think of swinging a scythe in the farms of Picardy. Rupert, in his unrest, again wrote to Eddie, "because I feel you're the one link I have with the heart of things in these bloody times." He said he just could not remain passive at such a time, and asked how or where he could be fitted in. If he could not go to the front as a fighter he intended to see what could be done about his going as a war correspondent.

Eddie, deep in Admiralty conferences to the small hours of the

night, did not allow official distractions to preclude thought of his friend in Rugby. But he was merely a small cog in the machine. And the busy days slipped away without immediate result.

Rupert, restless behind the home bars, tried to busy himself with versewriting. But trifling with rhymes, when the guns were pounding closer, seemed a bitterly trivial task. He struggled with two sonnets, each of which, he confessed, came out of the oven a fallen cake. As he repeated to his friend at 10 Downing Street, "I've got to *do* something!"

His brother Alfred was already trying for a commission in the Nationalist Volunteers. Harold Monro closed and locked his desk and sped away on his motor bicycle, to volunteer as anything from a dispatch bearer to a home-uhlan on wheels. He was rejected because his engine was the wrong kind. The next day he appeared with an officially sanctioned engine, only to be told that no more motorcycle enlistments were being considered.

The excitement and the tumult increased, with the news that the Expeditionary Force in Belgium was already in action. And the thought of not functioning, at such a time, became unbearable to Rupert. It was not long before the verseweaver who had once protested that he would and could live for Art alone was back in London exploring possibilities for getting into active service. He first thought of enlisting in a London corps as a private. Then, through his Cambridge connections, he hoped to get a commission in the Territorials. This was an assignment, however, that he faced without enthusiasm, for he had been told the Territorials were to be dispatched to the Suez Canal, where sandstorms were frequent and fierce. And he, with a congenitally weak throat, had always been allergic to dust.

But early in September Eddie sent word that he was getting forms for both Rupert and his good friend Denis Browne, not unforgetful of the bond between the two. He also added that he was having a personal talk with the First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill, who had quietly and unofficially promised a Navy appointment for the Fellow of King's. Churchill, both

scholar and statesman, had already become acquainted with Rupert's verse. He realized that a man who could sing of England and English life as did the author of "Grantchester" would eventually prove of value to the empire.

Two weeks later Rupert and Denis received their commissions as sublieutenants in the newly formed Royal Naval Division, and were attached to the Anson Battalion.

The anxious and ever solicitous Eddie was at Charing Cross Station to see them off when they entrained for Betteshanger Camp, "magnificently unprepared" for what was ahead of them. He reported them as excited and a little shy, like two new boys going to school, looking happy and handsome in their new uniforms and especially proud of their caps.

It was a noisy departure, as mixed with gloom and gladness as was the intermittent rain and sunlight that showed at the station's end. To Rupert his month and a half of pleasure-seeking was already fading to a far-off and lovely vision. There were sterner issues ahead.

CHAPTER 19

The Antwerp Expedition

THE hastily improvised camp to which Rupert was dispatched had once been a placid and tree-studded park. It was the estate of Lord Northbourne, gladly surrendered to the Royal Navy as a land-force training ground when the Channel ports were threatened and England was so in need of men.

It was essential to hold those Channel ports. The Germans, after their sweep through Belgium and Northern France had been stopped at the Marne, made a second bid for victory by advancing on the Scheldt and attacking Antwerp, delusively regarded as the second strongest fortress in Europe. With the Antwerp door still open British troops could land in Flanders, protect the much-needed coast line of the Pas-de-Calais, and block a turning of the Allies' left wing. The Lords of the Admiralty felt that Belgium's huge harbor base, with its arsenals and hospitals and stores of supplies, should not fall to the enemy.

The threat of such a fall spurred England into activating its Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve, founded eleven years earlier, and pouring what men it could gather up into the First Naval Brigade Camp at Walmer and the Second Naval Brigade at Betteshanger Park. Rupert, as an officer of the Anson Battalion at Betteshanger (where each Battalion was named after a famous admiral, such as Drake or Howe or Hood or Nelson or Anson), found himself in the midst of a motley crew of ex-seamen and stokers and sturdy miners from Durham and Northumberland, with a sprinkling of city volunteers from what was then popularly known as the

R.N.V.R. The majority of the Ansons had had experience at sea, but as a land force they were fish out of water, confused by new conditions and as untutored in military tactics as the greenest recruits. There was much to be learned; and the time was short.

Rupert, as a sublieutenant, threw himself heart and soul into his work. The country about Betteshanger was well suited for training purposes and during a torrid August sham battles were carried out by day, night attacks were made and repelled, and hour by hour imaginary Germans were shot down at the busy rifle ranges. In one night attack, the sublieutenant and his Anson men, supported by two machine guns with blank ammunition, were posted to guard a road. There, after two long midnight hours of silence, the stealthy "enemy" suddenly bore down on them. The machine gunners, seeing capture inevitable, feverishly dismantled their guns, leaped a hedge, and raced across a field, to be confronted by their lone lieutenant.

"What does this mean?" they were asked.

"It means, sir," said one breathless refugee, "the bloody enemy has taken our road and we've had to scramble and since you're the only officer in sight what the devil are your orders?"

Such were the men with whom the scholar from Cambridge had to deal. They may have seemed a rough lot as they sweat at bayonet practice and wore away the park turf in their morning drill and stole a fag draw or two as they dug their latrines beyond the copper beeches. Rupert, with his new touch of toleration, was able to speak of them as "dears." Tent life had its discomforts and in the fight against time training had to be arduous. But there was always room for a bit of play, ferocious football matches and even more ferocious boxing bouts, one of which prompted the young lieutenant to tell the combatants he hoped they would acquit themselves equally well in the sterner fight just ahead of them. There was much singing and music in the serried tents. There were also canteens to be visited, and a band to lead the hymns on Sunday, and a hot bath in the near-by rectory bathroom

for those officers desiring such a luxury. Even on the long, route marches through country lanes and over the hills Rupert was always ready to lead his platoon in lustily singing "It's a Long Way to Tipperary" or some music-hall favorite like "Hello, Who's Your Lady Friend?"

Here again the young poet's genius for friendship asserted itself. His men liked him, even though at times their field blunders made him feel that any effort to mold them into soldiers was rather like trying to build a statue out of sand. But the work went on. The busy weeks slipped by. Under their army blankets tired recruits wondered when training would end and the relieving joy of fighting would begin. Some of them, like the young lieutenant who had left the Russian Ballet and Cambridge and Rugby so far behind him and could triumphantly write home that he now knew how to fire a machine gun, must have wondered why one nation battles with another and why the flower of a country's youth could so lightly give up all its pleasures and plans at that country's call. The young lieutenant decided to write a sonnet about it. That sonnet will live in the hearts of men as long as the English language lives.

On the morning of Sunday, October 4, well before five o'clock the sleeping camp was awakened by reveille. The drowsy men proclaimed the bugler had been drinking too much beer the night before. But the bugle call was repeated, followed by the announcement of the brigade major: "Up, everybody! We are leaving for France today!"

In three hours' time kits were packed, baggage was loaded on transports, and the Second Brigade had started on its march to Dover, with two brass bands and a drum-and-fife corps to make the long journey easier. Spirits were high, the skies were blue, and the undulating country through which they marched was England at its best. So they sang as they went, fitting words of their own to established marching songs and, when passing a pub, appropriating a solemn church hymn to the dry-throated refrain of

There's a man selling beer over there,
There's a man selling beer over there;
Over there, over there, over there, over there;
There's a man selling beer over there.

At Dover the dusty marchers were met by street crowds and cheers and waving flags. By nightfall their equipment was aboard the waiting transports. But just before sailing it was discovered no grub was aboard for a much-needed evening meal. This meant a hurried foray into Dover's hotels and eating places and an equally hasty return to the ship, the relief column loaded down with loaves of bread and joints of roast beef and bottled cider.

Before midnight the Ansons were on their way, escorted by two destroyers. The men slept on the decks, or tried to sleep, under their greatcoats. But the excitement of getting into action was too much for most of them. All night long, as the destroyers' searchlights swept the dark seas, music-hall choruses echoed across the water.

At four o'clock the next morning they anchored off Dunkirk, where they pitched for eight weary hours in a choppy sea while *mal de mer* caused much of the hilarity to ebb out of their systems. Early in the afternoon they entered the harbor and tied up at their quay, with the battalion band complimenting the waiting Gallic crowd by playing the "Marseillaise." When told they were to entrain at once for Antwerp and take part in the defense of that city, they learned, for the first time, their actual destination. But another day slipped away, in a muddle of orders, before the Ansons tumbled wearily into their troop train after an inadequate meal of bully beef and biscuits. They were warned of possible attack, but their train, crawling through the dark, was neither shelled by land nor bombed from the air. The hungry and wearied heroes aboard were glad when they crossed the Belgian border early the next morning and at towns like Dixmude and Thielt were greeted with *"Vivent les Anglais!"* but, what was more important, with hot coffee and rolls to follow the cheers.

Tuesday morning, October 6, they were in sight of Antwerp, the Antwerp from which, according to Churchill, the Huns were to be driven out like rats.

But *Les Anglais* were coming too late. Ten days before their arrival the Germans had begun their heavy howitzer bombardment of what was supposed to be the impregnable outer forts whose heaviest artillery was six-inch and slightly obsolete Krupp guns. The seventeen-inch howitzers soon reduced the outer forts and forced the Belgians to fall back across the River Nethe. The inner ring of forts still held, but captive balloons were in the sky directing German fire, the city itself was under bombardment, and the bulk of the Belgian army had retreated to the left bank of the Scheldt.

The situation when the Ansons detrained on the outskirts of Antwerp was more than serious; it was critical. Their reception may have been a noisy one, with apples and chocolate and much beer and cheer and Belgian girls showing their joy by embracing an occasional English officer, but the hilarity was short-lived. The boom of the guns was drawing nearer and the news from the front was ominous. The Ansons were ordered up to the firing line.

During their five-mile march to Vieux-Dieu they passed Red Cross motor vans loaded with wounded, bandaged stragglers limping dispiritedly toward the city, cartloads of Belgian dead being brought in for burial. The crusaders who cheered at the news they were to cross the Channel and save Belgium began to realize that war was no light adventure.

Rupert was billeted in a deserted chateau, where he and his commanding officer, George Cornwallis-West and his good friends Denis Browne and Arthur Asquith sat behind blacked-out windows and ate an improvised meal of veal and bread and black coffee. As they devoured that much-needed meal the house shook with the detonations of the near-by naval guns and the cannon on the Belgian-manned fort at the foot of the chateau's garden.

It was far from a happy night, filled as it was with anxieties and uncertainties, with weary and wild-looking sailors trudging over

the once orderly lawns and trampling on flowers and exploring an incongruously Edenic orchard.

"Little pools glimmered through the trees," Rupert wrote of that chateau experience to Violet Asquith, "and deserted fountains, and round corners one saw, faintly, occasional Cupids and Venuses—a scattered company of rather bad statues—gleaming quietly. The sailors dug their latrines in the various rose gardens, and lay down to sleep. But it was bitter cold, under the shrubs. By two the shells had got unpleasantly near, and some message came. So up we got, frozen and sleepy, and toiled off through the night."

By dawn they had pressed on to the open trenches in the neighborhood of Fort Number Seven, trenches then almost useless from the enemy's bombardment. These, as the shells screamed overhead, had to be deepened with trenching tools and buttressed with sandbags and façaded with barbed wire. But that change of position was not altogether regretted when Cornwallis-West and his men learned that the chateu which had housed them the night before had been demolished by a well-placed German howitzer shell.

Rupert, inured to cross-country walking, did not suffer from the long marches. But he and his comrades-in-arms did suffer from lack of sleep, and lack of shelter from the cold, and attenuated meals that usually consisted of a biscuit and a shred of bread and cheese with a tin mug of coffee. They suffered too from the discovery that their position was untenable, since under cover of darkness the German heavy artillery had moved closer to the inner fort ring and was now mercilessly pounding the city. The Ansons had nothing with which to respond to the enemy's siege batteries.

Rupert and his fellow officers knew their position was hopeless even before they were ordered to fall back. The Germans had forced the Scheldt and were pushing on toward Lokeren. Four days of well-directed howitzer fire, coming with the regularity of clockwork, had left the inner fort lines with trenches razed, re-

doubts reduced, powder magazines blown up, and ruptured oil tanks turned into a sea of flames.

Antwerp had to be abandoned.

Under cover of darkness the Ansons were compelled to desert their entrenchments (with some of them so determined to stay they had to be dragged bodily out of their battered shell holes) and begin their melancholy march toward the sea, twenty-five long miles to Saint-Gilles. Their happiness was not increased by the news that the railway station at Wilryck, where all their baggage was stored, had gone up in flames. That fire, in fact, left Rupert lamenting the loss of a treasured bundle of manuscripts.

In order to reach the still open road to the south the retreating naval battalions had to cross the Scheldt on a pontoon bridge, even as a German spy—who was promptly bayonetted—attempted to blow it up. To reach the bridge the Ansons had to follow a narrow road that wound past burning oil tanks at Hoboken, where dead horses and cattle lay roasting in the ever-widening sea of flames. The race through heat and smoke was done on the double, with faces shielded and khaki tunics considerably scorched. An intermittent splatter of shrapnel became a mere incident; there was no time to give thought to a trivial near-by shell burst.

Once over the Scheldt the weary night march to Saint-Gilles was resumed. The Ansons were joined by a melancholy procession of refugees from Antwerp itself—old men with packs, others with loaded barrows and perambulators, old women and white-faced girls, priests and nuns, frantic mothers with babes in their arms, little children stumbling along hand in hand. Some collapsed with fatigue on the cobblestone road; some stopped to look back at their ruined city with tears streaming down their faces. But the motley throng moved on, wearily making way for lumbering Belgian artillery, and old London busses loaded with marines, and straw-strewed carts where sleeping children were nested. There were even clusters of cattle, prodded forward between the crowded wheels and herded aside to let the faster moving military pass through.

In a retreat there is never elation. Yet in that melancholy march to the sea British pluck was not entirely eclipsed. When from the top of a lumbering London bus a weary and smoke-stained Anson man shouted the familiar challenge: "Are we downhearted?" a prompt chorus of *"No's"* rolled up from the marines slugging along through the combined darkness of midnight and unmistakable defeat.

When the footsore Ansons, with their stomachs as empty as their water bottles, came to a market town and were told they could rest for an hour, they swarmed in a body toward a spacious-looking church that promised momentary warmth and shelter. But they went only as far as the door. Every aisle and pew was already filled with sleeping Antwerp refugees. Slumbering bodies occupied every inch of space, even up to the sanctuary itself. So Rupert and his men had to be satisfied with the cobblestones of the open market place, where for one brief hour they reposed with their heads resting on their haversacks.

At daybreak on the morning of Friday, October 9, they arrived at Saint-Gilles, where troop trains were waiting to carry them to Bruges and where the men could be billeted and given their first solid meal in a week. Rupert, who loved bathing, had not had his clothes off since leaving England. His friend Denis, equally fastidious, had had nothing more than a change of socks in the same length of time. But the two of them, that night, sat down to a memorable meal of liver and bacon and eggs and *pain-court* and coffee.

The next morning they entrained for Ostend, where at midnight they boarded a waiting transport, devoured a meager supper of two hard biscuits softened with Machonachie stew, and flung their worn bodies down on the crowded cabin floors to sleep. On Monday morning (the twelfth) their transport tied up at Dover Pier and the ill-fated Antwerp Expedition was a thing of the past.

Of that expedition and the Royal Naval Division's part in it the First Lord of the Admiralty had officially reported: "The despatch of the Naval Brigades to Antwerp had interrupted for a time the

progress of their instruction and training. They were chosen because the need for them was urgent and bitter; because mobile troops could not be spared for fortress duties; because they were the nearest and could be embarked the quickest. . . . The Belgian people will never forget that the men of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines were with them in their darkest hour of misery, as, please God, they may also be with them when Belgium is restored to her own by the armies of the Allies."

CHAPTER 20

Soul Searchings and Change

RUPERT came back from Antwerp with a new touch of maturity. He had had his introduction to the realities of war and had awakened to the uncertainties of life, either at home or on the firing line. He also learned there was a gulf between combatants and noncombatants. The withdrawal of the fighting man into a special seclusion and reserve could not escape him.

"We're under a curse," he wrote to John Masefield from Chatham where he had gone for further musketry training, "or a blessing, or a vow to be different. The currents of our lives are interrupted.... The central purpose of my life, the aim and end of it now, the thing God wants of me, is to get good at Beating Germans.... And so I feel from my end, sometimes, that it *is* a long, long way to Tipperary. And yet, all's well. I'm the happiest person in the world."

That claim of felicity must, of course, be swallowed with a grain of salt. A new mood of introspection had taken possession of the once skeptic and carefree Epicurean. More remarkable than his repeated proclamation of happiness—always so suspiciously like whistling in the dark—was the fact that the disciple of Shelley, once so boastful of his atheism, could pause to give thought to what God was demanding of him. The depths had been stirred and his soul was troubling him. Squatting in a trench and wondering when a shell would wipe him out made him think of what seemed his wasted youth. Just as military regulations had ordained that he must part company with his flowing mop of hair, the exactions of soldiering demanded a divorce from the emotionalism of the artist in an ivory tower. His Muse was no longer a laughing

one. "It [the Antwerp expedition] *did* bring home to me how very futile and unfinished my life was," he confessed to Frances Cornford. "I felt so angry. I had to imagine, supposing I *was* killed. There was nothing but a vague gesture of good-bye to you and to my mother and a friend or two. I seemed so remote and barren and stupid. I seemed to have missed everything."

He had, however, no absence of courage to regret. His experience under fire had shown him gallantry in unexpected quarters and bravery in unpredictable persons. "It's queer," he commented in the same letter to Mrs. Cornford, "to see the people who *do* break under the strain of danger and responsibility. It's always the rotten ones. Highly sensitive people don't, queerly enough. I was relieved to find I was incredibly brave. I don't know how I should behave if shrapnel were bursting over me and knocking the men round me to pieces. But for risks and nerves and fatigues I was all right."

If, on his return to England, the distractions of camp life left him weary of body and numb of brain he had the satisfaction of discovering how the so-called intellectuals of England were responding to their country's need for men. He found that response both astonishing and impressive.

"Masefield," he wrote to a friend in America, "drills hard in Hampstead, and told me with some pride a month ago that he was a Corporal. And *thought* he was going to be promoted to a Sergeant soon. Cornford is no longer the best Greek scholar in Cambridge. He recalled that he was a very good shot in his youth and is now a Sergeant Instructor of Musketry. . . . Gilbert Murray and Walter Raleigh rise at six every day to line hedgerows in the dark and 'advance in rushes' across the Oxford meadows."

Many of Rupert's school friends had been wounded; many others had been reported wounded and missing, many were dead. He sought consolation, in the face of these tragedies, in the thought that perhaps their sons will live the better for it all. But that thought brought yet another to his mind.

"It must be good to have a son," he confided to Jacques Raverat.

"When they told us at Dunkirk that we were all going to be killed at Antwerp, if not on the way there, I didn't think much (as I'd expected) what a damned fool I was not to have written more, and done various things better, and been less selfish. I merely thought 'What Hell it is that I shan't have any children, any sons.'"

That craving for progeny, with the impermanence of life so sharply confronting him, was as persistent as his feeling of being a failure, and almost as persistent as his premonition of an early end. "I really think large numbers of male people don't want to die," he also wrote to Jacques. "My mind's gone stupid with drill and arranging about the men's food. It's all good fun. I'm rather happy. I've a restful feeling that all's going well and I'm not harming anyone, and probably even doing good. The only horror is that I want to marry in a hurry and get a child, before I vanish. There's the question, to ponder in my sleeping-bag between the thoughts on the attack and calculations about the boots of the platoon. Insoluble. And the weeks slip on. It'll end in my muddling that, as I've muddled everything else."

Rupert and the Ansons, on their return to England, had been consigned to Blandford Camp, in Dorsetshire, for the further training which Belgian misadventures showed to be sorely needed. Blandford was a newly built camp of huts, in the bracing climate of the Downs, only fifteen miles north of Lulworth and the seashore where in his youth Rupert had spent more than one happy summer. But the autumn rains had turned that camp site into a sea of mud, through which tractors pulled store-laden wagons and men on maneuvers slushed ankle-deep. Although on sadly infirm earth the routine there remained stubbornly naval. Watches were rung on the large ship's bell and the men, in going to town, always spoke of "going ashore." Each battalion had its own flagstaff and there was much rivalry as to which could maintain the best-kept "lines."

Rupert found his platoon of ex-stokers not easy to command. Most of them were older than their golden-haired officer and most

of them nursed a longing to be back underdeck with a shovel in their hands and a rolling floor under their feet. Their language was fruity and their cunning in cutting disciplinary corners as marked as their ingenuity in obtaining intoxicants. But Rupert, growing wiser in the art of mingling with men with the bark on, was not without affection for them. He may not, in musketry drill, have understood the constituent parts of a rifle as well as he pretended, and on the muddy parade ground he may have had a furtive look into his *Infantry Training* booklet before snapping out his orders in a sufficiently subcellar bass voice. But, mere landlubber that he was, he won and held the respect of his men.

Camp life at Blandford was not all beer and skittles. The enemy faced there was persistently mud—mud churned deeper by the voyages back and forth of seagoing motorcars and tractors and heavily loaded supply vans. It meant a campaign of road making, with Rupert walking up and down semiliquid canals between two rows of huts, inspecting fatigue parties as they brought whins and buckets of stones and day by day strove to turn the quagmire into a usable thoroughfare. Because of those quagmires Rupert wrote to Ka Cox imploring her to send him as soon as possible a pair of knee-length "gummy boots."

Most of the field work was done on the neighboring Downs. On those rolling hills, which proved ideal country for sham battles and night operations, many a bloodthirsty bayonet charge was carried out and many a wily reconnoitering party was surrounded and captured. There were few idle hours. Each officer's hut was equipped with an iron cookstove and the shacks could be kept tolerably warm and dry. There, night after night, when the men were sleeping, Rupert sat up and struggled with his sonnetwriting. Those quieter hours in camp life gave him his only chance for meditation. Being a poet, the need for such meditation was always with him.

Those arresting sonnets that brought all Britishers so nobly together were not mere accidents. To weave any such interlocking rhyme structure into a natural flow took time and thought; to give

freshness and simplicity to a strictly formalized framework meant much testing and rejection; to accept regularity and yet defy it when it tended toward monotony, and to prevent mere radiance of language from obscuring the intellectual content of the written line—all this, as with every artist in words, meant much deliberation and patient amendment.

The hurly-burly of Blandford gave Rupert small chance for contemplation. He insisted, however, on seeking expression for the deeper feeling that was sweeping through him. He may have been tired in body, but the inner flame was still burning. He confessed to the fear, in those hours of physical weariness, that his lines were woefully rough and unfinished. Yet in what he deprecatively called his "five camp children" he was slowly shaping the five unforgettable sonnets which later, under the title of "1914," made the world feel he would some day be one of England's great poets.

That day never dawned. What he accomplished in his short life must be accepted as more a generous promise than an attained perfection.

Rupert was not altogether happy at Blandford and the rumor that the Ansons might be sent to Belgium quite failed to disquiet him. "Not a bad place and time to die, Belgiumm 1915," he wrote to John Drinkwater. "(I want to kill my Prussian first.) Better than coughing out a civilian soul amid bedclothes and disinfectants and gulping nieces, in 1950! The world will be tame enough after the war (sic)—for those who see it. I had hopes that England would get on her legs again, achieve youth and merriment, and slough the things I loathe, capitalism and feminism and hermaphroditism and the rest. But on maturer consideration pursued over muddy miles of Dorset I think there'll not be much change."

He had one consolation in the midst of his mud. He awakened to the fact that the shire in which he found himself was rich in history. "Where our huts are," he proclaimed with Old World pride to Cathleen Nesbitt, "was once an Iberian fort against the Celts, and Celtish against Romans, and Romans against Saxons.

Just over the hills is that tower where a young Astronomer watched the stars and a Lady watched the Astronomer." He is referring, of course, to Thomas Hardy's *Two in a Tower*. "In Tarrant Crawford, two miles south, a Queen lies buried. Last week we attacked some of the New Army in Badbury Rings, an ancient fort where King Arthur defeated the Saxons. . . . Where I lay on my belly cursing the stokers for their slowness Guinevere once sat and wondered if she'd see Arthur or Lancelot return from the fight, or both, or neither."

One source of Rupert's inner disquiet was an arbitrary and apparently needless shuffling of officers from battalion to battalion. He not only wanted to be with his friend Denis Browne, but he greatly desired a transfer from a superior whom he began to regard as incompetent. Even with friends at court the desired transfer was not easy to obtain. But eventually Eddie was able to send word that Rupert and Denis were to be allotted to the Hood Battalion.

"I hope you've got Denis by now," the friend at court wrote to Rupert, who was unusually low in spirits because of recent anti-typhoid inoculations. "He was too conscientious. I was terribly disappointed when I thought that all my machinations were foiled and that my happy band of brothers was to lack one of the best jewels. But it has all come right in the end. Backhouse [Officer in Command] promised me on Monday to telegraph that Denis was to go to Hood at once."*

That Denis was not blind to either Eddie's consistent guardianship or to his goodness of heart in making certain quiet suggestions to the Commission of Selection is proved by the young composer's cry of gratitude. . . ."All the thousands of people, Eddie, you have been good to, all your life, will find some important post that is crying for *you* to fill. For there are many poets, but few Eddies!"

There were others in the Hood Battalion who were to make up a companionable group of crusaders, men from the playing fields

* By permission of Sir Edward Marsh.

and the college dorms of Cambridge and Oxford. One was Arthur Asquith, familiarly known as "Oc." He was the second son of the Prime Minister and brother of Violet. Arthur had won his own right to eminence, during the Antwerp adventure, by both his intrepidity under fire and the ingenuity with which he foraged eatables for his often mealless men.

Another was Patrick Shaw-Stewart, scion of a military family, whose Scottish-born father had been a general. Patrick had made a mark for himself at Eton, where he carried off the Reynolds Scholarship. He later went to Oxford, and still later distinguished himself in finance with the well-known Baring Brothers in London. He had a keen sense of humor, a quick tongue, infectious vitality and a mania for candor. Although a year younger than Rupert, he was not unknown to Mayfair and had a discerning sense of social values, yet was without snobbishness and was always a good companion. Like Rupert, he had traveled in America, had assessed the virtues and vices of the New World and had learned to chew gum. He had also acquired a slightly exotic nasal twang which prompted the Prime Minister's daughter to express the hope it would not be passed on to the dulcet-voiced Rupert.

Patrick had already participated in the Antwerp Expedition, being posted as Embarkation Officer at Dunkirk, where, because of his mastery of French, he was also at times an unofficial liaison officer. There was a touch of daredeviltry in his make-up and also a touch of poetry, though the verses he penned were more marked by pungency than impressiveness. He and Rupert, with so much in common, remained close friends until the end of their calamitously short lives.

There was also Bernard Freyberg, a born fighter from New Zealand who at the outbreak of the war was a soldier of fortune in Mexico and had traveled on foot three hundred miles to the coast in order to take ship for the defense of the Empire that was calling for his services. How valuable those services were is shown by the fact that he was eventually given command of the Hood Battalion, won the D.S.O. and the coveted Victoria Cross and

distinguished himself for gallantry in action at Ancre and Beaucourt.

Also in that band of new Argonauts was the Australian-born F. S. Kelly (known as "Cleg" to his intimates) who had rowed in the Eton Eight in 1899 and in the Oxford Eight in 1903. He not only won the Diamond Sculls in 1902, 1903 and 1905 but also rowed for England in the Leander Eight at the Olympic Regatta in 1908. Besides being an athlete he was an accomplished musician. He was scholarly enough to read Homer with Rupert as their ship wove its way toward the Isles of Greece. But he was lighthearted and fun-loving and could match Denis Browne in wringing music out of a strident and sea-worn ship's piano. He even tried, though none too successfully, to elevate the musical taste of his lusty stokers by leading them down the more winsome ways of English folk songs.

His blithely argumentative spirit may have added to the gaiety of that cohesive little group, but there was no frivolity in his make-up when it came to fighting. He survived the Gallipoli disaster and was later made Lieutenant Commander of the Hood Battalion, eventually to meet his death leading a gallant attack on German machine-gun emplacements between Ancre and Beaumont-Hamel.

It was only later that this band of ardent young officers was joined by Charles Lister, the second son of Lord Ribblesdale. Charles was London-born and of the same age as Rupert. He may have been a pampered child of wealth, but the hardships of soldiering had no terrors for him. He too was educated at Eton and later went up to Oxford where he was one of the brilliant scholars of Balliol and, like Rupert, betrayed a leaning toward the Fabians. When war broke out he was interpreter for the Foreign Office, but later joined the Hoods. He was three times wounded at Gallipoli. His third wound, incurred while reconnoitering a Turkish communication trench, caused his death—"to the sorrow of all ranks who knew him," to quote the words of Sir Ian Hamilton, his Commander in Chief.

It was a gallant little band of the best the empire could produce, Rupert and Denis, Bernard Freyberg, Patrick Shaw-Stewart, Arthur Asquith, F. S. Kelly and Charles Lister. These seven young Argonauts may have seemed inconsequentially lighthearted as they retraversed together the fabled waters of the Eastern Mediterranean made doubly alluring by their school life delvings into the classics. But behind their shielding frivolities lurked the knowledge they were on more than a junket. They belonged to a race that was averse to wearing its heart on its sleeve.

CHAPTER 21

The Crusaders Set Out

RUPERT had hoped to spend the Christmas of 1914 at home, but a delayed leave compelled him to remain in camp, where he had mud instead of mistletoe, and a crowded hut instead of holly. His only carols were those of gin-inspired ex-stokers, who celebrated the day with enough firewater to wash away their never overstable thoughts of discipline. Some of them got lost in the surrounding woods; some danced half-naked in their smoky shacks. When Rupert ventured into the open he beheld the portly Battalion C.P.O. (who had been drunk since dawn) earnestly conducting his Battalion band in an Irish jig in the middle of the muddy Parade Ground. The inebriated leader was unable to beat time, but he could still dance with abandon.

After the holiday Rupert did obtain a week's leave and hurried up to London, where he had luncheon with Eddie and Winston Churchill, spent a happy two hours with Cathleen and forgot the rigors of camp life in an equally happy party at the Ambassadors. He had asked Eddie to assemble amusing people for that party.

"It's so important after camp," he wrote to his prospective host at Gray's Inn. "If you only knew how rarely desirable a good joke becomes to one after the mud! As for WOMEN—there one hesitates. *Pro* is the fact that one aches, after camp, for femininity, the sound of skirts, the twitter of the creatures, even the smell. *Against* it, the reflection that there aren't many amiable ones, and few fully possessed of a sense of humor."

The only shadow on that brief holiday was the death of James Flecker, the fellow poet with whom Rupert had once poled canoes

up the river at Grantchester. The blithe-spirited but tubercular Flecker had spent his last years in Swiss sanatoria, valiantly fighting to fulfill the future Sir Walter Raleigh had prophesied for him. Rupert had the sad task of writing his fellow Georgian's obituary for the *London Times.* His opinion of that article is significant. He was grotesque and ornate, he lamented, not having time to be simple.

It was in the quietness of his Rugby home, after his London holiday, that he busied himself imparting the finishing touches to his "1914" sonnets. He had the feeling, when the last lines were written, that soldiering had given a limp to his Muse. He stood ready to admit that only two of the poems seemed satisfactorily good to him. It was a feeling with which the world failed to agree.

Back in Blandford again Rupert and his friends were flurried by the news Winston Churchill was coming to parade the troops there. Eddie also had promised to come along, on the understanding he was to "cut the staff" and have dinner with Rupert and Denis and Oc Asquith.

On the day of the parade, however, there was no Eddie and no dinner. Because of the bad weather the First Lord arrived so late that the assembled Hoods, after standing for half an hour in the pouring rain, "like a battalion of Lears," were dismissed and sent to their quarters. When Churchill finally arrived he insisted on a review. With the Parade Ground a morass and the sodden men ankle-deep in mud, the march past was not a happy one.

The valedictory nature of such a review, however, could not be overlooked. A second flurry went through the camp, restive and all at sea as to what front they were to be sent, when pith helmets were served out to two battalions of the Marine Brigade. For headgear of that nature, all things considered, unmistakably pointed toward the menacing Eastern Mediterranean. Rumors spread and died away. The young Hood officers amassed books on Turkey and Greece and the Aegean; the oversanguine stokers wondered why they should still have to slush through long route marches when they might soon be traveling camel back through

a disintegrating Byzantine Empire. The Turks, they felt, were no match for British brawn.

Nothing happened. Nothing, at least, beyond a few cases of spotted fever followed by an epidemic of influenza. Both Oc and Rupert fell under the latter, to be bundled off by the worried Violet to Walmer Castle (the country home of the Asquiths). There Oc's sister got her first experience as a war nurse, experience that later sent her to Winchester Hospital where, as a second Florence Nightingale, she took temperatures, dispensed drugs and dressed septic shrapnel wounds, refusing to be lapped in comfort when so many were facing the horrors of war.

On the last days of January Rupert, still under the weather, went up to London, where Eddie took him under his wing, installed him first in his own Gray's Inn flat and later had him transferred to 10 Downing Street. There the tardily recuperating Rupert slept between linen sheets and luxuriated in hot baths and eleven-o'clock breakfasts while close below him the counsels of war were being held.

It was on February 22 that official word came that the Hood and the Anson Battalions were to embark for the East. All details were withheld. When they were to sail, and to what base they were to go, remained a dark secret. But men and officers were elated, the camp became a sudden hive of activity, haversacks were packed, farewell letters were hurried off. As usual, the thought of action, even though it meant the hazards of battle, was better than camp mud and passivity.

Three days later the King and Winston Churchill came to Blandford, reviewed the entire Naval Division, and sped them on their way. It was a brilliant winter-end day, with the sun flashing on swords and bayonets and the massed bands playing the naval "March Past" as the battalions quickstepped by the flag-draped saluting base.

On the parade ground, two days later, the same bands played "Auld Lang Syne" and the Hoods and Ansons, wearing their new web equipment and pith helmets, marched off to Shillingstone,

where they were to entrain for Bristol and the Avonmouth docks.

The most exciting feature of that entrainment developed from an insufficiently disciplined battalion of mules, mustered for transport use on Byzantine fields. They failed to share in the enthusiasm of departure, and their reluctance to be coaxed or prodded and pushed into the waiting goods train caused as much merriment in the ranks as it did loss of dignity on the part of the transport officers. It was almost four o'clock in the morning before men and mules started on the four-hour journey to tidewater.

At Avonmouth they boarded the *Grantully Castle,* an old Union Castle liner that had been converted into a transport. As she swung out into the Channel, convoyed by two destroyers, Rupert stood at the rail looking back at the shore line of his beloved England, watching the receding hills of Devon and Cornwall that he was never to see again.

Rupert, when he found the Naval Division was to be sent to the Dardanelles, was both happy and excited. The poet under the Navy khaki thrilled at the thought of being a second Odysseus and traversing historic seas once plowed by the galleys of Carthage and Venice. His heart stirred at the prospect of threading his way through islands that had re-emerged out of Herodotus and had been made glamorous by Homer and Sappho. He proclaimed to Katharine Cox that the eighty thousand lucky ones of the Royal Naval Reserve were to have the best job of the war, and that he, after attending the first Mass in St. Sophia since 1453, would probably be back by May.

"It's too wonderful for belief," he wrote in the same strain to the worried Violet of Walmer Castle. "I had not imagined Fate could be so benign. I almost suspect her. Perhaps we shall be held in reserve, out of sight, on a choppy sea, for two months! . . . But I'm filled with confident and glorious hopes. . . . Perhaps the fort on the Asiatic corner will need quelling, and we'll land, and come to it from behind, and they'll make a sortie and meet us on the plains of Troy! Shall we have a Hospital Base on Lesbos? Will Hero's Tower crumble under our 15″ guns? Will the sea be

polyphloisbic and wine dark and unvintageable? Shall I loot mosaics from St. Sophia, and Turkish Delight, and carpets? . . . I've never been quite so happy in my life, I think. Not quite so pervasively happy, like a stream flowing entirely to one end. I suddenly realize that the ambition of my life has been to go on a military expedition against Constantinople. And when I thought I was hungry or sleepy or aching to write a poem, *that* was what I really, blindly wanted."

Before going on board Rupert received, by way of Eddie, a good-luck charm which he was asked to wear always when facing the enemy.

"This talisman," Eddie told him, "is from a beautiful lady who wants you to come back safe. Her name is not to be divulged. I have promised that you shall wear it. I beseech you to make my word good. It is a very potent charm, she says, and even if you don't believe her it's a sign of the sort of way people care for you, even if they don't know you very well. I hope that all the love and wishes that go with you may be in some way an armour to you. Denis promised to take care of you; and you must take good care of him. I shall live in a shadow, Rupert, till I see you and him safe again. You know I'm glad and proud you are going. I expect you know what you are to me—the thing I'm most proud of. . . ."*

From north of Tunis ten days later Rupert wrote back: "I wish I were younger. Then the five-pointed jewel [the talisman] would have been the height of my wish. Even now it thrills a little. I wear it around my neck with my identification disk. Please thank *Anonyme* and say I'm quite sure it will bring me luck. But what 'luck' is we'll all wait and see. At least we'll all wait and *you'll* see. *I* can well see that life might be great fun, and I can well see that death might be an admirable solution. At that quote to her something appropriate and leave her to her prayers. But first give her a kiss—hand or mouth, at your discretion—of gratitude for me."

* By permission of Sir Edward Marsh.

He was still again harping on the presentiment of an early death. It clouded even those happy days at sea. He was not without an inkling of dangers ahead of him. The war situation, on the whole, was none too cheering. He could not escape the knowledge that while the German offensive had been stayed on the West the threat of a compensating German victory in the East had grown stronger with Turkey's declaration of war against the Allies. That meant peril to the Russian flank, with the added peril of an Austro-German invasion of Serbia and the possible deflection of Bulgaria and Rumania to the Central Powers. Early in the year Russia had asked for a prompt demonstration against Turkey, the forcing of a passage for the British fleet through the Dardanelles and the seizure of the Gallipoli peninsula. And later, if necessary, an invasion of the Balkans. To this Lord Kitchener had hesitatingly agreed. The reasons for his hesitation grew clearer as the difficulties of the operation became more apparent.

The young officer on the *Grantully Castle,* sniffing the land smell of the Andalusian shore, and getting his sea legs after feeding the fishes in the Bay of Biscay, had no doubt of the final outcome. He even felt grateful for the self-realization any such test of his manhood was imposing on him. Of it he could write:

> Now God be thanked Who has matched us with His hour,
> And caught our youth, and wakened us from sleeping,
> With hand made sure, clear eye, and sharpened power,
> To turn, as swimmers into cleanness leaping,
> Glad from a world grown old and cold and weary. . . .*

The *Grantully Castle,* which Patrick Shaw-Stewart described as a poky little Union Castle boat, was sadly overcrowded and was far from palatial in equipment. But this dampened neither the happiness nor the high hopes of the scholarly young Argonauts who banded together and bandied wit and talked poetry and

* From *The Collected Poems of Rupert Brooke.* Copyright, 1915, by Dodd, Mead & Company.

philosophy in the mess hall until reminded by the perplexed stewards there was another meal to be made ready. There was also a battered old piano on board and at this Denis Browne and the musical Kelly from Australia night after night led the sextette in song, in unofficial competition with the battalion band that played nightly in the tightly packed officers' mess. On the lower deck a melodeon supplied sufficiently adequate music to stir the stokers into square dances. By day there were boxing bouts and games. Clusters of soldiers pressed about the notice board to scan the latest war news brought in by wireless.

Life on board was not all music and merrymaking. There were daily setting-up exercises and drill and bayonet practice. There was rifle and kit inspection and signaling lessons in essentially restricted quarters. Drill in such crowded space was full of comic difficulties. It was not easy to take a "strong" platoon as a semaphore signaling class and put it through its maneuvers in the space afforded by two or three yards of casing and the deck corresponding thereto. There was always the danger of being too interested in one's next-door neighbor. Patrick, sandwiched between Johnny Dodge (an American who became a subject of the King to join the Hoods) and the solemn-faced Rupert, found his attention to his own platoon sadly diverted by the sharp-voiced Americanisms of the one and the curt yet more dulcet-voiced orders of the other.

When not drilling, these would-be martinets were humbly thumbing through their manuals; when not deep in the intricacies of the Maxim gun, they were struggling to acquire a rudimentary knowledge of the Turkish language or meekly exploring the difference between modern Greek and the Greek of their school-day texts.

Rupert did no writing, complaining that, as always, life at sea left his mind a blank. He did little reading, managing merely an occasional dip into Homer and a few pages of Eliot's *Turkey in Europe*. It was, for him, more a time for meditation. The chaplain of the *Grantully Castle* (the Reverend Henry C. Foster) has

painted a significant picture of the poet as he voyaged toward the Aegean and the fabled islands of his boyhood reading.

"In the evening, when all was still, there was one officer who was often to be seen pacing the deck alone. No one ever thought of disturbing him, as we knew by instinct that he wished to be alone. It was Rupert Brooke. He gloried in those quiet nights in the Mediterranean and remained drinking in their beauty long after the others had turned in. Some of the un-thinking ones, perhaps, scarcely understood this love of solitude; but they who knew the poet best could understand. . . . It was only his devotion to his beloved England that had brought him where he was. And yet he was destined never again to gaze on her quiet valleys, to roam in her woods and fields."*

It was on Friday, March 5, that the *Grantully Castle* passed through the Straits of Gibraltar, where a line of destroyers prowled back and forth to guard the gateway of a disputed *Mare Nostrum*. In the calm days that followed, Rupert could view the African coast, with the white walls of Algiers nestling in between the dark hills, and see still farther away elephantlike mountains with snow-clad peaks. On Monday, swinging south into Malta Channel, he saw the British flag fluttering over the same island of Gozo where Ulysses idled for seven years under the spell of Calypso and where that siren's grave could still be pointed out. A few hours later the *Grantully Castle* pushed on to Malta and anchored off the sunlit Fish Quay. The anchor chains had scarcely come to rest when a French battle cruiser steamed into the harbor, whereupon the *Grantully Castle's* band came up on deck, the men stood at salute, and the "Marseillaise" was given with gusto, a compliment which was vocally and promptly returned by the French officers and men.

Rupert, that evening, went ashore in a dhyear, glad to be on land again and dazzled by the color and movement of the fortress city, with its mixture of Italian and English and Arabic and

* From Canon Henry C. Foster's *At Antwerp and the Dardanelles*, Mills & Boon, Ltd., London. Copyright, 1918.

French. He and Oc Asquith and Denis rambled about among the flat-roofed and green-shuttered houses that impressed them as belonging to the seventeenth century and reminded Rupert of Verona, only, he conceded, it was cleaner and more orderly, thanks to English influence. He visited the cathedral and the strange little shops, marveling at the equally strange headdress of the Maltese women, a heritage from the Napoleonic occupation when indignant citizens and priests imposed on their fickle womenfolk this punitive crown of shame for being too friendly with the French invaders. Later, after dining in state at the Union Club, Rupert and his comrades repaired to the local Opera House, where the exuberance of the men in khaki both puzzled and annoyed the more solemn-minded elite of Malta. Still later, to round out their day ashore, they investigated night life in an island café or two and were rowed back to their ship, singing as they went.

Before noon the next day they were headed eastward again. During the next two days they saw islands and shore lines that prompted Rupert, in writing home, to voice the wonder if anyone in that war could be called luckier than he was. For across the warm and wine-dark Mediterranean he could look out on southern Greece, and Mount Athos with its cap of snow, and those storied islands of the Aegean of which he had so often dreamed.

On March 11 the *Grantully Castle* reached Lemnos and anchored in Mudros Bay. Rupert knew he had finally reached the Island of Philoctetes, where once Jason tarried and where Hypsipyle's tears once watered the soil in which peasants were now growing their almond trees—the almond trees that were just coming into bloom and turning the village orchards into bewildering masses of pink and white. All Lemnos, at that season, lay beautiful with flowers, and in the brief Aegean spring the verdured hills had lost their rocky hardness and taken on a haze of loveliness.

But more impressive was Mudros Harbor itself. It had neither jetties nor quays nor piers; its one old wooden landing platform could boast of neither derrick engine nor jib crane. But that spa-

cious bay of singularly blue water was big enough, behind its narrow entrance, to shelter from wind and wave and prowling submarine the entire Mediterranean fleet.

Rupert, gazing over the harbor, could see it crowded with gray warships in tiers, with black-painted transports and colliers from the Tyne, with sleek destroyers and rusty-plated tramps still redolent of kerosene and salt fish, and lighters and trawlers and drifters and tugs from the Mersey and the Thames. It was a spectacle of color and movement, from the stately *Queen Elizabeth* to the dark-sailed Greek sloops peddling their supplies of sheep and goat and fish.

There was a reason for that congregation of seacraft. Mudros Bay, during the Dardanelles operations, was the invaluable harbor that could give shelter and safety to the entire Allied fleet in Eastern waters. Why they tarried there, when time was so precious, was one of the enigmas of a campaign crowded with enigmas.

During that week of idleness Rupert found much to interest him. There were storied hills to be explored and villages to be visited and garrulous peasants on whom he could try out his restricted knowledge of modern Greek. There were quaint inns to be invaded, where the native wine had a mingled flavor of licorice and turpentine. There were the ceaseless convoys of donkeys. There were the toilers in bleak little plots of ground, picturesque in their blue trousers and their goatskin jackets, and there were mysteriously veiled women in the Turkish villages just over the hills. There was Kastro, the island capital, and there was always the harbor itself with its muffled white and gray and ivory-colored buildings as antique-looking and serene as an Italian town in silverpoint, between a sea and sky of opal and pearl faintly touched with gold. And there were the evening hills of Samothrace, lighted up at sunset with a deeper gold that turned to crimson and orange and slowly faded to azure.

It was a rich and happy week for Rupert. The only rupture in its peace was the abrupt announcement that the Hoods were to make a landing on enemy territory.

"Off we stole that night through the phosphorescent Aegean," Rupert wrote to Edward Dent, "scribbling farewell letters and snatching periods of excited dream-broken sleep. At four we rose, buckled on our panoply, hung ourselves with glasses, compasses, periscopes, revolvers, food, and the rest, and had a stealthy large breakfast. . . . We paraded in silence under paling stars along the sides of the ship. The darkness on the sea was full of scattered flashing lights, hinting at our fellow-transports and the rest. Slowly the sky became warm and green, and the sea opal. Everyone's face looked drawn and ghastly. . . . We made out that we were only a mile or two from some dim shore. I was seized with an agony of remorse that I hadn't taught my platoon a thousand things more energetically and competently. . . . About seven someone said: 'We're going home.' We dismissed the stokers, who said quietly, 'When's the next battle?' and disempanoplied and had another breakfast. If we were a feint, or if it was too rough to land, or in general, what little part we blindly played, we never knew, and I shall not. Still, we did our bit, and not ignobly, I trust."

On Thursday, March 18, the Naval Division received orders, this time authentic, that it was to sail at once for Turkish waters.

CHAPTER 22

Shadowed Days and Premonitions

WHILE lying off Greece Rupert had written a brief farewell letter to Eddie. It is a remarkable letter because it shows the definiteness with which he apprehended an early death. It is arresting, too, for the message it conveyed.

"Dear Eddie—This is very odd, but I suppose I must imagine my nonexistence, and make a few arrangements.

"You are to be my literary executor. But I'd rather like Mother to have my manuscripts till she dies, the actual paper and ink, I mean, then you, save one or two you might let Alfred [his brother] and Katharine Cox have if they care.

"If you want to go through my papers Dudley Ward will give you a hand. But you won't find much there. There may be some old stuff at Grantchester. You must decide everything about publication. Don't print much bad stuff.

"Give my love to the *New Numbers* folks, and Violet, and the Masefields, and a few who'd like it. I've tried to arrange that some money should go to Wilfrid and Lascelles and de la Mare, to help them write good stuff, instead of me.

"There's nothing much to say. You'll be able to help the Ranee with one or two arrangements. You've been very good to me. I wish I'd written more. I've been such a failure. *Get Cathleen anything she wants.* Best love, and good-bye. Rupert."

He had already explained to his mother that it was his wish, in case of his death, that any money accruing from the sale of his books should be divided between his three brother poets, in the hope that such help might set them free from editorial bondage and allow them to write the things they most wanted to write.

Preoccupied as he was with the idea of impending death, he was able to share in the joy of the new Crusaders as the fleet sailed from Mudros Bay on the morning of March 19. Ship after ship, crowded to the rails, swung out to sea under a blue sky that rang with their cheers as the transports passed the moored men-of-war. Every man aboard could not escape the thought that in a few hours he would be standing face to face with death, that his body might be torn by shrapnel and his good red blood might be ebbing away on the sands of Gallipoli. But in the heart of each was the exultation of heroes. Courage was to be tried and gallantry was to be put to the test. They could sing and cheer and wave their helmets as they stood across for Tenedos and passed a French cruiser from which answering cheers came over the torquoise-tinted water.

The entire fleet of transports sailed down the coast of Gallipoli, where British warships were already busy shelling the Strait forts. Rupert, from the deck of the *Grantully Castle,* could see the puffs of smoke from the Turkish shore batteries. As they approached the entrance to the Dardanelles and threaded a way through that narrow passage bristling with death to the unwary, he remembered the ancient Greek who had christened the "Clashing Rocks." He remembered, too, that he was following the course of the equally ancient *Argo.*

Once through the channel, however, the Hood men were confronted with a second disappointment. They were not to make a landing. Their cruise along the coast was designed as merely a feint, a movement to distract the enemy and blanket a projected naval attack which did not occur.

Signals were received to return at once to Lemnos. This they did, in a sea as unruly as the spirits of the men. Rupert was not destined to buy Oriental rugs in Constantinople, or, as he had hoped, carry away some sacred relic from St. Sophia.

From Mudros Bay, two days after the return, Denis Browne wrote to Eddie telling him that Rupert's health was excellent and the one horror of war they were at the moment facing happened to be *lice.* But there were other discomforts in that crowded har-

bor, to which supplies had to be ferried all the way from home ports. Fresh vegetables and fruit were largely a luxury denied; even the drinking water, transported in lighter tanks, was tepid and tasteless. Fresh water was so scarce, indeed, that only sea-water baths were possible for the men. And even these, with the harbor pretty well polluted with the refuse from the assembled ships, were not everything that could be desired.

The difficulties extended even to the shore. The hilly terrain about the harbor was without adequate open ground for land maneuvers. Any mass escape from the uncomfortably overcrowded ships was out of the question.

So on March 24 the *Grantully Castle* was ordered to sail for Egypt. On that southward voyage they steamed past such beautiful islands as Patmos and Kos, Samos and Rhodes, reaching Port Said on the morning of March 27. The next day the Hoods disembarked and encamped not far from the docks, close enough to the Arab quarters to be pestered night and day by native peddlers and wily conjurers in rags, and countless armies of flies. The tents were pitched on the open sand, where, when Rupert turned his back to the huddled town and the ships beyond it, he could see nothing but the salt lagoons of the Delta and the far-reaching desert.

When the wind blew, everything was yellow with sand—sand that was inhaled, sand that seeped into clothing, sand that drifted in under tent flaps and was prompt to deposit itself on any waiting dish of food. The heat was intense. But beach-bathing, luckily, was possible—when no Turks were in the neighborhood—and Rupert the water lover was always ready for a swim, careless of the Egyptian sun that beat down on a body that had long since lost its Tahitian tan. In the sand were minute amoebae that invaded the human body and produced symptoms not unlike those of common camp dysentery. It was a sickness from which scarcely a man in the Gallipoli army escaped. It did not kill, as a rule, but it lowered vitality and left men incapable of active service.

Rupert did not escape those amoebae. He felt far from "in the

pink" when part of the brigade was sent some thirty miles up the canal to occupy trenches near El Kantara. No Turks appeared to harass them, but they were harassed by a blistering sun. Five days later they returned to the Port Said camp. Rupert got a three-day leave and with Oc Asquith and Patrick Shaw-Stewart went off for a forty-eight hour visit to Cairo. And there, thanks to Oc's knowledge of Arabic, they explored the bazaars and bought jade and bargained for souvenirs and rode about on camels. They inspected the temple of Ghizeh and the mosque of Mohammed Ali and on cheery little Egyptian donkeys visited the tent city of the Australians and saw the tombs of the caliphs by moonlight.

The next day Rupert had breakfast in bed. Tired out from his sightseeing, he returned to camp with a temperature and a splitting headache and a small swelling on his lip that left him wondering if he had been careless about adjusting his mosquito net. He was, he remembered, in the land of malaria, the malaria that later incapacitated one-tenth of the entire British Army in the Eastern Mediterranean.

He was far from a well man when Sir Ian Hamilton, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, arrived at Port Said to review the Naval Division. The camp doctor had diagnosed the patient's illness as sun stroke and Rupert was lying under a stretch of green canvas with wet cloths on his head when Sir Ian dropped in to see him—at the earlier suggestion, it might be added, of the astute Eddie, who was always quietly campaigning for Rupert's advancement.

"I saw Rupert Brooke," his Commander commented on that visit, "lying down under a shelter, rather off colour, poor boy. He had got a touch of the sun the previous day. It was nothing, and, essentially, he was looking in first-class condition." [This, obviously, was interpolated to reassure Eddie, for Rupert had lost weight and was notably listless in mind and body.] "He very naturally would like to see this adventure through with his own men. After that I think he would like to come to me. It was very

natural, and I quite understand it. I should have answered the same in his case had I been offered a staff billet."

It was, of course, loyalty to his men and especially loyalty to his five good friends that caused Rupert to decline what must have been a tempting offer to a mere platoon leader. This he tried to make clear in a letter to his mother, to whom Eddie had already written about the suggested transfer. "I wrote and told your mother," he explained to Rupert, "to put her mind at rest, directly I heard. And she is full of relief and also sanguine hopes for a rocket-like military career for you. I had not thought of it in that light. It would be funny if you became a Field Marshal—through your sonnets!"*

Rupert's own letter somewhat dashed the maternal hopes for a rocketlike soaring to glory as a staff officer. "The first day I was sick," he wrote to his mother, "before I got out of camp, was the day our C.O.C.-in-Chief (you'll know what that is) reviewed us. I'd met him once or twice in London. He came to see me after the review and talked for a bit. He offered me a sort of galloper aide-de-camp job on his staff. But I shan't take it. Anyhow, not now. Not till this present job's over. Afterwards, if I've had enough of the regimental officer's work, I might like it."

He failed to add that it was the ties of comradeship that held him back. His one great happiness, in those days of trial, was being with Denis Browne and Patrick Shaw-Stewart and Cleg Kelly and Oc Asquith, and also with Charles Lister, who had joined the tight little group at Malta. They were all young, and even in the hardships and uncertainties of campaigning they were able to wring laughter out of their misadventures and face gloom with a stubborn sort of gaiety.

That was made plain when Rupert's condition became so serious that he was taken from under canvas and transferred to Port Said's Casino Palace Hotel, already sadly overcrowded. There he was

* By permission of Sir Edward Marsh.

placed in a small room with Patrick Shaw-Stewart, who was also a victim of too much sun and amoebae-born dysentery. For a week the two patients, vacillating between discomfort and jollity, seemed very far away from the war front.

They may have been out of circulation but they were not out of a craving for companionship. As they reclined opposite each other on their narrow and none too comfortable beds they bandied jokes back and forth and exchanged anecdotes of their school days and competed in growing beards, Patrick's a flaming red and Rupert's a golden brown. They found their strictly limited diet made endurable by their daily verbal warfare with a gesticulating Italian waiter who knew little English and declined to accept their efforts at his native tongue as understandable.

Patrick, in fact, admitted that his Casino Palace Hotel sojourn was the best part of the war for him. The two patients' enjoyment of their release from active duty was undoubtedly heightened, as they lay in their cool room with wet cloths on their heads, by thinking of their comrades back in a windswept camp where the ants were active and the flies were thick and the sand was so penetrating that one of Rupert's stokers had complained he had swallowed so much of it he had a tombstone forming in his guts that wouldn't be easy to get rid of. They could still find things to laugh at. But when they rebelled against arrowroot and milk and attacked a meal of eggs and Mediterranean soles they had to pay the piper.

The resultant relapse left them weak as kittens and kept them to their beds. A letter from Eddie came to cheer them up. Denis was able to report that Rupert and Patrick, both still suffering from acute diarrhea, read that letter with gurgles and fled to the rear.

On Easter Eve (April 3) Rupert was visited by the battalion chaplain, the Reverend Henry Foster. The kindly padre knew him well, as he did Denis Browne, who had sat up all night for him transcribing the music of "On the Resurrection Morning" so that it could be played by the band at his Easter Day church service.

"I went up to his room in the Casino Palace Hotel," the chaplain reported, "and found him complaining of a slight attack of sunstroke and a swelling on his lip. He chatted for about ten minutes, but seemed somewhat dazed. A large mosquito-net of white muslin hung over his bed, and when I went into the room he pulled this to one side. Never had his face looked more beautiful than now. His eyes flashed with a brightness that was unearthly and as he talked one read in his countenance that dazzling purity of mind which betrays itself so often in his poems. In the room sat his friend, Patrick Shaw-Stewart, who was also unwell. And so, after staying about twelve minutes, I left them."*

It was on the morning of April 9 that word came the Hoods were to board the *Grantully Castle,* this time, it was rumored, to make a landing on the Gulf of Saros. This carried a promise of fighting Turks instead of dust storms. Rupert, when asked if he felt fit enough for the enterprise, promptly informed his superior officer that he was. So he and Patrick were trundled aboard. But there, instead of drilling a platoon in beach-landing, they spent the next few days on the flat of their backs. When they emerged from their cabins, rather unsteady on their pins, the *Grantully Castle* was found to be heading back to Mudros Bay. A new plan of campaign had been decided upon.

"Anyhow, here I am," Rupert wrote to Violet Asquith, "well up on that difficult slope that leads from arrowroot, past chicken broth, by rice pudding to eggs and milk, and so to eggs and boiled fish and finally chickens and fruit and even meat. But that is still beyond the next crest. But while I shall be well, I think, for our first thrust into the fray, I shall be able to give my Turk, at the utmost, a kitten's tap. A diet of arrowroot doesn't build up violence. I am as weak as a pacifist."

He still hoped and still expected that some sudden turn of events would thrust him and his comrades into the blaze of war. But as he cruised back through the blue waters of the Aegean he could

* From Canon Henry C. Foster's *At Antwerp and the Dardanelles,* Mills & Boon, Ltd., London. Copyright, 1918.

not escape the feeling that the laziest lotus-eating day he had ever idled away in the South Seas was a bustle of decision and purpose compared to the part that he as a platoon leader of the once eager and expectant Hoods was then playing in the campaign. His heart lightened, however, when the *Grantully Castle* and her sister transports dropped anchor at Mudros and there were given orders to steam on to Skyros and assemble at Trebuki.

Rupert had always dreamed and had often spoken of a possible visit to the Northern Cyclades. Skyros, lying between Lemnos and Imbros off the coast of Thessaly, had especially appealed to him. It was the island of Achilles and Theseus, the island of Odysseus and Pyrrhus and Hephaestus, wreathed with legend and rich in history. He and Eddie had once talked of a cruise in those enchanted waters. Now that he was steaming through the Isles of Greece, and steaming none too fast because of the lighters being towed by the *Grantully Castle,* he responded to the spell of opal-tinted shore lines and blue-shadowed hills where Saint Paul himself had walked and Hypsipyle had wandered.

A new ardency of spirit made him refuse to surrender to the weakness of the flesh. He declined to stay in his bunk and insisted on taking part in deck maneuvers. He even participated in a fancy-dress ball, given for the men of the Hood to break the monotony of life on an overcrowded transport. He helped his excited stokers concoct what costumes they could for the occasion, though resources were limited and bath towels proved the easiest means of transforming big-muscled men into indecorous old ladies with incongruously hairy legs. One burly member of the platoon, who decided to go as Queen Elizabeth, transformed Denis' worn Burberry into a skirt, used a cabin curtain for his stomacher and crowned his head with a nunlike wimple made from a boat bag. A blue antiseptic bandage played the part of a veil. His costume was more elaborate than that of the other stokers who went as Greek athletes clad in nothing more than a loin cloth. Many of the ex-miners, long familiar with coal dust, showed a marked preference for black-face and paraded as Negroes.

It was a merry night, and a noisy one, for the men. But Rupert, tired of the tumult, slipped away to his own cabin and there took out the notebook in which from time to time he had been jotting down fragments of verse and an occasional golden phrase or two that seemed worthy of saving. He glanced through an unfinished "Ode to England" and proudly inserted a new line: "In Avons of the heart her rivers run."

On that same night, thinking of home, he wrote a letter to his mother, a letter in which he repeated how fine his Mediterranean voyaging had been and how happy he was to be sailing through phosphorescent seas "in a warmer air than England." He had claimed, in an earlier letter, that he had achieved a stoic lethargy in which nothing could now depress him—"not even money." But the discerning mother in Rugby later confessed to the chaplain of the *Grantully Castle* that she had detected and been disturbed by a forced cheerfulness in those different messages from the Eastern Mediterranean. She went on to explain to the chaplain that Rupert, as a rule, had no great love for the clergy, though he was not without his own strong belief in his own idea of religion and usually acted up to it. And since this particular clergyman had commented on Rupert's fondness for solitary meditation on shipboard, she took pains to point out that wanting to be alone and losing himself in meditation had been a habit with her son from his boyhood.

Yet Rupert's meditations that night, as he gazed out from the loneliness of his cabin at the star-spangled Aegean churned into phosphorescence by the surrounding transports, must have taken on a coloring considerably more somber than the ruffled sea all about him. He was in the midst of still another retreat. Even this adventure of soldiering, of which he once expected so much, had turned into a series of futilities, of sorties that seemed always to come too little and too late. It was small wonder that he nursed a feeling of his brief career's incompleteness and could still again cry out that his youth had been a wasted one. Happiness too feverishly sought was still eluding him. That eager spirit, so ready to do and

to give, so avid for experience, so willing to burn the candle at both ends, had been not so much confounded by the weakness of the flesh as he was frustrated by the ironic gift of being too richly endowed.

CHAPTER 23

The Dark River Is Crossed

WHEN Rupert and his fellow Argonauts landed on Skyros on the morning of April 17 the Mediterranean spring was merging into the heat of summer. They found a warm sun shining down on the rockiest and yet the most beautiful of all the Cyclades and on the bluest of blue water in its island-sheltered bays, blue that was transfused to pale green in the shallows where the bottom was white marble veined with pale rose and yellow.

Marble, in fact, was the most striking thing about the island. The broken terraces and ridges and ravines of Skyros, even more mountainous than Lemnos, glowed with that white and pink granulated limestone which for centuries had been quarried to embellish the palaces of Rome and the churches of Italy. It made the island look like a sort of gigantic rock garden. In the loamier depressions and land cups grew sage and balsam, dwarf holly and ilex and wild olive. Under these the turf was starred with all manner of flowers, orchids and pale blue anemones, rock hyacinths and russet fritillaries, with thyme to mingle with the smell of mint and leave the warm air, forever filled with the hum of bees, as fragrant as any English garden between Grantchester and Cherry Hinton.

About this island Rupert and his friends wandered, reveling in freedom after their cramped quarters afloat, drinking in the beauty of the verdure-softened slopes, chasing and capturing the tortoises they found along the shore, eating goat cheese and dark bread and honey at a peasant's hut when they grew tired.

Little had changed there since Achilles buckled on his sword and departed for the windy plains of Troy. Time had stopped

among those marbled hills. The few peasants who tended their sheep and goats and dipped nets in the blue-green bays were not greatly changed from the same fleece-clad aborigines who had watched a sea-worn Odysseus beach his galley on narrow slopes of sand shadowed by Homer's "towering crags of Skyros." And still Homeric-looking were the mountain shepherds who periodically drove their herds down to the shore line to let them drink of the sea water that was reputed to give the island cheese a flavor all its own.

Rupert was happy there. He even knew an odd sense of exaltation when, little more than half a mile up the boulder-strewed watercourse, he found an inland coign that struck him as inexpressibly peaceful. At the head of that arroyo, bone-dry since winter, he stumbled on a small grove carpeted with anemones and mauve-tinted flowering sage. There the bees hummed in the thyme-scented air and the olive branches swayed quietly in a sheltered little plateau guarded on one side by Mount Paphko and on the other side by Mount Komaro, with Mount Khokilas shouldering up into the sky farther inland. The peace of the place so appealed to him that he rested there, watching the shadows lengthen and the sun grow more golden on a stretch of the sea that could be glimpsed through the glade trees.

He had no knowledge, as he drank in the beauty of that bee-haunted hollow between the hills, that he was to return to it and sleep there for a long time.

Rupert, at the end of their day ashore, did not swim back to the *Grantully Castle*, as did Denis Browne and Charles Lister and Patrick Shaw-Stewart and Arthur Asquith. He was tempted to, but a mile swim through sea water was too much for him. Instead, he was ferried back to his boat by an island fisherman whose wife rowed the boat while her lord and master delivered himself of his own version of how Achilles had escaped conscription in the Trojan War by dressing as a girl and hiding between the hills with a bevy of island maidens.

Tuesday, April 20, was a Divisional Field Day for the Hoods. Rupert went ashore with his brigade, climbed stone-strewed arroyos that played hob with his boots and his men's, constructed gun pits on sun-baked hillsides and resisted the charge of imaginary enemies. The heat was oppressive and the going was rough. Rupert did his best to prove that he was still steady on his feet. But he was so exhausted by the time he reached his ship that after a silent dinner he staggered off to his cabin and crept into his bunk.

It was plain, the next morning, that he was seriously ill. He refused to eat and complained of pain in his head and back. And the mysterious swelling on his lip, which he had once regarded as a mere mosquito bite, had grown larger. He was feverish and restless, but still confronted his visiting shipmates with a show of jocularity and the claim a few days' rest would see him in the pink again.

When the ever-faithful Denis came to him with a cutting from the *London Times* reporting how the dean of St. Paul's (Dr. Inge) had quoted the last of Rupert's war sonnets in his Easter Sunday sermon, the tired poet's face lighted up with a languid smile of happiness. His smile broadened when Denis went on to read what the Gloomy Dean had said of "The Soldier" poem: "The enthusiasm of a pure and elevated patriotism free from hate and bitterness and fear had never found nobler expression. And yet it fell somewhat short of Isaiah's vision and still more of the Christian hope. It was a worthy thought that the dust out of which the happy warrior's body was once compacted was consecrated for ever by the cause for which he died; yet was there not a tinge of materialism in such an idea?"

Rupert, as he listened, raised himself on one elbow. Then the golden head sank back on its pillow.

"I'm sorry the worthy Dean didn't think me as good as Isaiah," he said with the ghost of a laugh.

A moment later his fever-flushed face grew sober and he peered up at his music-composing friend with a new light in his eyes. At

the back of his head, he announced, was an unwritten song he wanted to work out soon, so that Denis could put lovely notes around it.

By nightfall, though, Rupert's temperature was alarming. The swelling had extended to the side of his face and down his neck. Dr. McCracken, the ship's surgeon, made two incisions in the swollen area and prescribed hot fomentations.

When these brought no relief he decided on a consultation. The fleet surgeon and a bacteriologist were called in. It was found that the patient was suffering from a pneumococcus invasion and that his condition was serious, though they failed to agree as to the treatment indicated. They did agree that the cramped cabin on the *Grantully Castle* was no place for a person so critically ill.

The nearest English hospital ship was in Mudros Bay at Lemnos. But anchored only about a mile away was the French hospital ship, the *Duguay-Trouin,* with tiers of empty and waiting berths and a dozen idle and waiting surgeons. It was at once agreed that Rupert should be transferred to the better-equipped *Duguay-Trouin.*

The patient protested against this move, claiming it would make everything more difficult for him to rejoin his battalion where he would soon be more than ever needed. He still hungered to be with his friends. But Denis, stooping over the comrade he had loved from their boyhood days at Rugby, talked with the fever-racked patient and persuaded him everything was for the best. Rupert, lapsing into a comatose condition, whisperingly withdrew his objections.

Half an hour later he was swathed in blankets and carried down to the waiting pinnace that was to convey him to the *Duguay-Trouin.*

Kelly, who stood at the rail and watched his comrade being lowered to the waiting boat, confessed that he had a feeling he would never see Rupert again, a foreboding that this young life, like that of Keats and Shelley and Schubert, was to be blotted out before delivering its full message.

Denis and Arthur Asquith accompanied Rupert on his transfer to the *Duguay-Trouin*. There the patient was put to bed in a roomy and comfortable cabin on the sun deck, where watchful surgeons did everything they could to win what was to be a brief and one-sided battle. Denis and Arthur stayed with him until six in the evening. Then, heavyhearted and helpless, they went back to their own quarters.

They returned to the hospital ship early the next morning. To their dismay they found Rupert not only weaker but practically unconscious.

There was much Denis wanted to say to his silent friend, but a veil already hung between them. He remembered how Rupert had merely murmured a faint "Hallo!" while his saddened friend was helping lift the patient into the pinnace that brought him to the *Duguay-Trouin*. It was a forlorn effort at casualness that cut to the quick. But valor could no longer compete against the coma that was turning pain into a betraying placidness.

At two o'clock in the afternoon the head surgeon told Denis the battle was lost. The case was hopeless and the patient was dying. Denis, compelling himself to quietness, asked if he might sit beside his old friend until the end.

This he was allowed to do. He sat watching the fever-flushed face with its tangled crown of golden hair, knowing that a once-radiant spirit was not long for this earth.

Late in the afternoon Rupert drew his last breath, with a cool sea breeze blowing in at the open door and swaying the curtains of the partly shaded windows, through which shafts of sunlight sabered the quiet room. It was no wonder the watcher could later write that Rupert could have wished for no quieter nor calmer end than in that lovely bay, shielded by the mountains made fragrant with sage and thyme.

Rupert had once told Denis he always dreaded the thought of being buried at sea. Long before his last visit to Skyros he had remarked that if he must some day be committed to earth he hoped it would be on one of the Isles of Greece.

The saddened and thoughtful Horatio who had murmured "Good-night, sweet prince" to a latter-day Hamlet remembered how an olive grove between the hills of Skyros, a few days before, had held Rupert's attention. And that, he decided, should be the poet's resting place.

It had to be a prompt decision, since orders had come for the entire fleet to sail for the Dardanelles the next morning. A plain oak coffin was brought up from the hold of the hospital ship. There was no time to engrave and attach the brass plate Denis pleaded for. Instead, a cauterizing iron was commandeered from the surgery and with this Arthur Asquith burned the letters RUPERT BROOKE on the stained oak wood.

The hurried preparations for the burial took place that same evening, the evening of the day that in far-off England had always been known as Saint George's Day. Denis and Oc had the sad task of gathering up their comrade's belongings, his books and scripts, his letters and notebooks, his scraps of paper on which a measured line or two had been jotted down, his treasured photograph of Cathleen holding a dove in her black-gloved hands, a bundle of her equally treasured letters—all had to be assembled and later dispatched to Eddie. Some of his less personal belongings, such as the sun glasses the thoughtful Violet Asquith had sent out to him and the talisman that had been meant to bring good luck and the unneeded muffler and camp utensils an overanxious mother had imposed on him, were duly packed and made ready for forwarding to Rugby. Along with them went the binoculars Geoffrey Keynes had given him after learning Rupert had lost an earlier pair in the retreat from Antwerp. Rupert's compass, a gift from the Prime Minister's daughter, was surrendered for all too brief a time to the loving hands of Charles Lister.

There was sadness in that sifting of a dead friend's belongings. It was not easy to go through the notebooks and the scraps of paper on which a dead hand had written some treasured line or two, the fragment of a love poem that spoke of "The sorrow that was anciently your lips," the unfinished threnody that referred to

God watching the grey dripping of the years
As we watch rain . . .

the loosely written scenes of a projected tragedy to deal with King Arthur, and the oddly prophetic lament of lips forever silent in

Here there is quiet in the grass for me
And rest beneath the boughs in the scented clover;
The round sun lies upon an opal sea—
Will you come back to me, when all is over?*

With their solemn task accomplished Freyberg and Lister hurried across Tris Boukes Bay to the Skyros beach and climbed the arroyo that led up to the olive grove. They took with them a group of men, stokers from Rupert's own platoon, carrying trenching tools. With these Denis and Freyberg, once the spot for the grave had been chosen, reverently turned the first sods. At that task the robust and audacious Freyberg was as sorrowful as the tight-lipped musician beside him.

The three sorrowing comrades had to wait a long time beside the open grave. It was almost midnight before the burial party, carrying the coffin, wound its way up the rocky path, where men with torches and lanterns had been posted every twenty yards to show the way. Heading that sad procession was an ex-stoker friend of Rupert's, bearing a white wooden cross on which the poet's name had been painted in black letters. These were followed by the firing squad, commanded by Patrick Shaw-Stewart. Then came the coffin, draped with the flag of England, the England of which the silenced lips had once so proudly sung. It was carried by twelve broad-shouldered Australian giants, wearing their wide-brimmed felt hats and cartridge belts, with cords wound round their waists for the lowering of the coffin. Behind them in the torch-punctuated darkness followed eight petty offi-

* By permission of Sir Edward Marsh.

cers, with General Paris and Colonel Quilter preceding the same chaplain who earlier in the day had visited the semiconscious patient, the patient he could no longer pray with, but could only pray for.

Of the group that clustered about the grave, over which one gray-green olive tree leaned, many of the Hood men were themselves destined soon to cross the Dark River. Six weeks later Denis Browne died heroically in battle; Colonel Quilter was killed; and still later Cleg Kelly, Charles Lister and Patrick Shaw-Stewart made the supreme sacrifice.

"We lined his grave with all the flowers we could find," one of the burial group wrote of that scene made ghostly by intermittent darkness and moonlight, "and Quilter put a wreath of olive on the coffin. . . . He [Rupert] wore his uniform, and on the coffin were his helmet, belt, and pistol."

The chaplain slipped a surplice over his uniform and quietly read the funeral service of the Church of England. When the hills re-echoed with the three volleys of the firing squad there was a clamor of startled owls in distant trees and through the darkness came the tinkle of many bells on equally startled flocks nestled amid the hills. Then the bugles sounded the Last Post.

Rupert was laid to rest in the valley for which he had already felt a mysterious kinship, with his head toward the guardian mountains and his feet toward the sea. On the grave his fellow officers heaped blocks of white marble* and anchored the humble wooden cross, on the back of which the brigade interpreter inscribed in Greek:

> HERE LIES THE SERVANT OF GOD, SUB-LIEUTENANT IN THE ENGLISH NAVY, WHO DIED FOR THE DELIVERANCE OF CONSTANTINOPLE FROM THE TURKS.

The next morning the *Grantully Castle* and her sister transports

* A more formal monument of white Pentelic marble was placed on the grave in the spring of 1920.

sailed from Skyros, for the dark adventure of the Gallipoli landing. Many of that mourning group were never again to see the lonely grave over which a gray-green olive tree leaned like a weeping angel.

In the cabin of the transport that was speeding him to his own untimely end Denis penned a not-easy-to-write letter to the dead poet's mother.

He protested that no word of his could convey to her the sorrow of those companions in arms Rupert had left behind him. Not one of those companions knew him without loving him, and all of them, from the officers above him to the men under him, mourned him deeply. But only those who knew him as a gifted poet realized the loss his passing meant, when he was just coming into his own, the loss to the world at large. And beyond his genius, protested the stricken Denis, there was that infinitely lovable soul and that stainless heart. He had gone to where he came from, but if anyone left the world richer by passing through it, it was he.

CHAPTER 24

Journey's End

A WAVE of sorrow went through England when a marconigram from the Fleet Admiral at Lemnos announced the death of Rupert Brooke. It was not known, at first, that he had passed away on a French hospital ship and had been buried on Skyros. Several days elapsed before the actual facts of his ending came through. But the response to the sad news was immediate and widespread.

One of the first to express his sorrow, and to do so with characteristic eloquence, was Winston Churchill, who had known Rupert both in person and through his poetry. He had even subscribed to an inner-circle suggestion that the young sublieutenant be transferred to the staff of his commander in chief, to the end that a youth so gifted might be removed from the hazards of front-line fighting. But the author of "The Soldier" had shunned that promised safety. War had no terrors for him because he had never known peace.

"Rupert Brooke is dead," the First Lord of the Admiralty wrote to the *London Times* two days after the message from Mudros reached England. "A telegram from the Admiral at Lemnos tells us that this life has closed at the moment when it seemed to have reached its springtime. A voice had become audible, a note had been struck, more true, more thrilling, more able to do justice to the nobility of our youth-in-arms engaged in this present war, than any other—more able to express their thoughts of self-surrender, and with a power to carry comfort to those who watched them so intently from afar. The voice has been swiftly stilled. Only the echoes and the memory remain. But they still linger.

"During the last months of his life, months of preparation in

gallant comradeship and open air, the poet-soldier told with all the simple force of genius the sorrow of youth about to die, and the sure triumphant consolations of a sincere and valiant spirit. . . . He advanced towards the brink in perfect serenity, with absolute conviction of the rightness of his country's cause, and a heart devoid of hate for his fellow-men. The thoughts to which he gave expression in the very few incomparable war sonnets which he has left behind will be shared by many thousands of young men moving resolutely and blithely forward into this, the hardest, the cruellest, and the least-rewarded of all the wars that men have fought. They are a whole history and revelation of Rupert Brooke himself. Joyous, fearless, versatile, deeply instructed, with classic symmetry of mind and body, he was all one could wish England's noblest sons to be."*

Equally prompt and equally explicit was John Masefield in expressing his sorrow at the blow that had befallen his country. "He was the best of the young men growing up in England," Masefield wrote to Violet Asquith. "And the gentlest, and the wisest. His death is like a putting back of the time. He would not have lived long, his hold on life never seemed sure. But a nature so beautiful ought to have had everything before being ended like this; and after the war this world would have been like clay for him to help to shape. . . . His death was proud and beautiful and in keeping. He will never be dead to any who ever knew him."**

The fond and faithful Edward Marsh, who once acknowledged the most memorable thing in his life had been his friendship with Rupert, was moved to proclaim that his young friend's death was the worst blow he had ever had, changing, as it did, everything for him. He described Rupert as nearer completeness and perfection than anyone he had ever known and in enumerating his dead comrade's appeal recalled Rupert's combination of intellect and

* Quoted from Edward Marsh's *Memoir*, pages clviii-clix, published by Sidgwick & Jackson, Ltd., London. Copyright, 1918.

** Quoted by permission of John Masefield.

goodness, his humor and sympathy, his beauty of person and kindness of heart, his ambition crowned with modesty, and his distinction of taste humanized by the common touch.

Thoughtful and generous as ever, Eddie hurried to Rugby to do all he could to console the bereaved mother, who had nursed a stubborn hostility toward this older man of affairs and his usurpation of so much of her son's time and affection. But with a common sorrow to share she softened a little in her feeling toward Eddie, though later on she was not remiss in her criticism of his *Memoir,* which was published without her co-operation and contained things that to her way of thinking should have remained personal and private. "Apple pie!" was the repeated caustic comment she penciled on the margin of the book text when her steel-cold eye scanned what seemed to her irrelevant and irreverent quotations from Rupert's letters. She did not, in fact, allow Eddie to remain her son's literary executor. Since Rupert's earlier testament as to the disposal of his estate had been an informal one, she remained the legal possessor of his papers, which she proposed to permit Eddie to hold only during his lifetime, after which they were to go to King's College.

Eddie, magnanimous to the last, took time by the forelock and immediately consigned the treasured heritage direct to King's.

This strong-willed and puritanical-minded woman, however, had her own stern sense of justice. When in 1916 Yale University posthumously bestowed on her son the Howland Memorial Prize, given "In recognition of some achievement of marked distinction in the field of literature or the fine arts or the science of government," she saw to it that the fifteen hundred dollars accruing from that award were added to his accumulating royalties and duly presented as an honorarium to Wilfrid Gibson and Lascelles Abercrombie and Walter de la Mare. The last-mentioned poet, to fulfill the terms of the gift which exacted a lecture from the prize winner, came to Yale and gave a scholarly and impressive address that stood a fitting response to the message Mr. Charles Howland had earlier sent to Mrs. Brooke.

"You must," the American donor had written, "have known already, by many avenues, of the feeling about him [Rupert] in the United States—of the sense of tenderness for his youth, of the attitude of possession of him jointly with Englishmen as one of the Masters of Song in our common tongue; and, indeed, that he typifies the nobility of sacrifice for a cause that is ours as well as yours."*

Closer to home the expressions of sorrow were even more prompt and poignant. In that year which hung so dark over England and in those days of bitter conflict when life was so cheap Rupert's preoccupied countrymen paused to mourn for their lost singer. Not since the death of Byron at Missolonghi had the passing of a soldier-poet so moved the hearts of the nation.

At Rugby, where Rupert was remembered as a golden-haired youth and revered as a golden-voiced lyrist, a memorial service took place in the school chapel where he had so often sung at vespers. There Sir Ian Hamilton unveiled a marble portrait medallion on which was inscribed "Rupert Brooke, 1887-1915" and under that name and date the well-known lines of "The Soldier" sonnet:

> If I should die, think only this of me:
> That there's some corner of a foreign field
> That is for ever England. There shall be
> In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;
> A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,
> Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam,
> A body of England's, breathing English air,
> Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home...."**

In a moving address the war-scarred general, after being received by a guard of honor made up of youthful members of the School

* Footnote in Edward Marsh's *Memoir*, page cxlii, published by Sidgwick & Jackson, Ltd., London. Copyright 1918.

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O.T.C. (in which Rupert had once proudly marched) paid fitting tribute to a younger man who was, like himself, both a soldier and a poet. A part of his address as reported in the Rugby *Observer* is as follows:

"We have come together to this School where Rupert Brooke lived and was best known, to tender our homage to his memory. Is it because he was a hero? There were others. But Rupert Brooke held all three gifts of the gods in his hand. He held them in his hand only to fling them eagerly down, as if they were three common little dice. He cast the dice, but Death had loaded them. . . . I went into his tent, where he was lying stretched out on the desert sand, looking extraordinarily handsome, a very knightly presence. Whilst speaking to him my previous fears crystalised into a sudden strong premonition that he was one of those whom the envious gods loved too well. So I made my futile effort and begged him to come to my personal staff, where I would see to it he would get serious work to do. I knew the temper of his spirit and I promised him a fair share of danger.

"He replied just as Sir Philip Sydney would have replied. He would have loved to come, he said, but he loved better the thought of going through with the first landing and the first and worst fighting, shoulder to shoulder with his comrades.

"He was right. There was nothing more to be said. And so on the afternoon of the 23rd of April when the black ships lay thick on the wonderful blue of the Bay and the troops in their transports steamed slowly out, cheering, wild with enthusiasm and joy, Rupert Brooke lay dying. . . ."

After that address the prayer of dedication was offered by the headmaster of Rugby, followed by a reading of the third chapter of Ephesians, from the same pulpit where Dr. Thomas Arnold had once delivered his historic sermons. Then, led by the organ the dead Denis Browne had loved to play of a winter afternoon, the gathering united in singing the National Anthem.

In that gathering was the poet's mother and his trusted and often-tried friend Edward Marsh. With them was Walter de la

Mare and Lascelles Abercrombie and Geoffrey Keynes and the black-clad sister of Cleg Kelly, who before his own death had been moved to compose a proudly mournful "Elegy for Strings" for the comrade he had helped bury in far-off Skyros.

Sitting in one of the chapel pews in the mellowed light from the stained-glass windows was a fellow poet, silent and stoic as ever. There Wilfrid Gibson must have lost himself in memories of earlier days when he and his dead friend had roamed the fields of England and found song in their shared love of life. He knew that a comrade voice had been silenced, that a warm and ardent spirit had slipped away into the Unknown. But that passing, he remembered, was not without its gleam of splendor, for of it he was able to write:

He's gone.
I do not understand.
I only know
That, as he turned to go
And waved his hand,
In his young eyes a sudden glory shone,
And I was dazzled by a sunset glow—
And he was gone.*

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The End

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